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# Inclusive lifelong learning in cities: Policies and practices for vulnerable groups



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# Foreword

## → Inclusive learning cities and the COVID-19 pandemic

‘Inclusive learning’ has long been a stated aim of international, national and local policy-making. Predicated on notions of equity and fairness, it is captured in UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: ‘Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’. While inclusive learning has often been discussed in terms of inclusive education – such as every child’s right to primary and secondary education and equal access to higher education, regardless of gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity or other factors – inclusive lifelong learning depends also on equal learning opportunities beyond the formal education system. It addresses every individual’s right to engage in meaningful and rewarding learning across domains as diverse as literacy, vocational skills and citizenship skills, in settings as varied as community learning centres, schools, libraries, leisure centres, universities and – through the extension of digital technologies – homes. The right to inclusive lifelong learning applies to all populations, with a concerted effort required to reach disadvantaged or vulnerable groups.

The potential for these ideals to be realized is clear: cities are home to a heterogeneity of learning institutions and media, through which all sorts of learning programmes can be provided.



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They are also home to demographically diverse populations. For a city to develop sustainably – with all citizens thriving individually, contributing to a shared life, and protecting the urban environment – its learning opportunities need to be numerous, targeted, and designed to meet the needs of manifold learners. If there is a disconnect between the learning provision on offer and the issues of greatest importance to local people’s lives, or if barriers of cost, discrimination and poor information curtail local populations’ active engagement in learning opportunities, the city can only develop unevenly and unsustainably.

These concerns were front and centre at the fourth International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC 4), which took place in 2019 in Medellín, Colombia, under the theme ‘Inclusion – A principle for lifelong learning and sustainable cities’. More than 150 stakeholders, including mayors, city administrators and educators, exchanged information on their respective cities’ contexts and challenges with regard to lifelong learning and sustainable development. Many also shared initiatives designed to target learning opportunities at specific vulnerable groups. Three days of discussion and insights provided a snapshot of how learning cities around the world are striving to foster inclusive lifelong learning, and concluded with the adoption of the Medellín Manifesto, a pledge to boost inclusion in learning cities in the coming years.<sup>1</sup>

Since ICLC 4, the world has changed significantly. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous impact on life in cities; in terms of learning, many forms of provision have been discontinued or disrupted and barriers imposed by the ever-present risk of infection. From a lifelong learning perspective, opportunities beyond the formal education system are under threat from strained budgets, learners being too preoccupied by health-related and economic matters to participate in non-compulsory learning, and the danger that a long-term battle to contain the pandemic might leave policy-makers without the necessary time, willingness or resources to support learning beyond the formal education system.

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1 [https://uil.unesco.org/system/files/iclc2019\\_medellinmanifesto\\_final\\_0.pdf](https://uil.unesco.org/system/files/iclc2019_medellinmanifesto_final_0.pdf)

Moreover, the pandemic has exposed and exacerbated almost all forms of inequality.

Major efforts are now required to meet several demands at the same time: protecting the health of learners, guaranteeing a variety of learning opportunities across all modalities, and ensuring that lifelong learning opportunities are inclusive of vulnerable populations. Following the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, learning cities quickly adapted to these demands by developing innovative initiatives in response to COVID-19, often with a particular focus on inclusion. Some of these initiatives were shared during a webinar series, UNESCO Learning Cities' Responses to COVID-19, organized by the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) between March and June 2020. Moreover, a UNESCO COVID-19 Education Response issue note, *How Cities are Utilizing the Power of Non-formal and Informal Learning to Respond to the COVID-19 Crisis*, published in September 2020, featured a number of examples of inclusion in cities, such as that of the collaboration between the Municipal Government of Hangzhou, People's Republic of China, and a private-sector company specializing in digital solutions to provide technological devices and training to low-income families so that they can access online learning.<sup>2</sup>

Another positive example featured in the issue note comes from the north-central Polish city of Gdynia, which partnered with local volunteers and non-governmental organizations to ensure the needs of people confined to their homes because of lockdown restrictions were not forgotten. Meanwhile, Espoo, in Finland, acknowledged its linguistically diverse population by developing a chatbot service for the dissemination of COVID-19 information in 100 languages. The automated service is supplemented by a multilingual counselling service that is staffed by volunteers and, again, available online. These are just a few of the initiatives being developed and implemented in cities around the world, and they are proof that the pandemic does not negate inclusive lifelong learning.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374148>



Further proof can be found in this year's fifth International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC 5), taking place in October 2021, the theme of which is 'From emergency to resilience: Building healthy and resilient cities through learning'. While discussions will centre on the COVID-19 pandemic and the practical challenges of having to adapt learning provision to a situation wherein communal life is curtailed, questions of inclusion will undoubtedly form part of the debate, as disadvantaged populations continue to bear the brunt of the pandemic's worst effects.

This publication therefore marks a transition between the learning city conferences of 2019 and 2021. Though the examples included in the following chapters were in place before the pandemic took hold, they show how those populations that were made even more vulnerable by the pandemic can be effectively targeted by lifelong learning opportunities. As learning cities prepare to share the experiences and insights they have acquired in health education and global emergencies as a result of COVID-19, the great value of inclusive lifelong learning – articulated in detail across the chapters of this publication – must remain central to their exchanges.

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## The case for inclusion in learning cities

Over half of humanity – 4.2 billion people – lives in cities, and this is predicted to grow to 5.2 billion by 2030.<sup>3</sup> Cities are growing in size partly because of their increasing attraction to people of all ages, who come from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds in search of better lives, greater safety, basic services and decent work. Cities around the world are facing acute challenges in managing rapid urbanization – from ensuring adequate housing and infrastructure to supporting the well-being of growing vulnerable populations that include migrants, youth at risk, digitally excluded populations and persons with disabilities, among others. These challenges need to be tackled across all parts of the city, including in slums and deprived neighbourhoods, to prevent endemic inequality taking root. The environmental impact of urban sprawl represents a considerable challenge for cities and rural areas alike. Access to high-calibre, resilient infrastructure and the provision of basic services for all urban and rural dwellers are key components of development objectives, as are local economic opportunities for the creation of decent jobs and social cohesion. Yet, in order to achieve this, learning opportunities in cities must be of high quality, be inclusive of the

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2018. The world's cities in 2018: Data booklet. [online] New York, United Nations. Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3799524?ln=en> [Accessed 5 August 2019].

diverse backgrounds of all learners and be offered on a continuous basis throughout life.

This means pursuing learning city development with a lifelong learning approach. While relevant to all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, lifelong learning is specifically a key principle of SDG 4, which calls on countries to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. In the *Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4* (2015), which sets out a shared vision for education in the context of achieving SDG 4, inclusion and equity in and through education are presented as the cornerstones of a transformative education agenda. In particular, Target 4.5 aims to eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, minorities, indigenous people, and children in vulnerable situations. Target 4.a, meanwhile, focuses on the provision of safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments. Cities can play a significant role in the achievement of these targets by promoting inclusive lifelong learning policies and practices for all. This publication demonstrates – in very practical terms – how, by cataloguing an array of city-level lifelong learning policies and practices targeted at vulnerable groups.

Following a detailed exploration of inclusion, equity and lifelong learning in sustainable cities in Chapter 1, the subsequent chapters explore examples of lifelong learning provision for specific groups in cities. The points raised in the chapters are based on realities on the ground, and the concrete cases show how to develop lifelong learning opportunities that benefit vulnerable populations. The value of this publication is twofold: (1) examples from cities around the world, presented within chapters dedicated to specific vulnerable groups, reveal how targeted learning interventions can have a positive impact on the learning opportunities and experiences of those with particular vulnerabilities; and (2) discussions around lifelong learning and the needs of vulnerable

groups, which feed into every chapter, collectively highlight the virtue of a holistic, inclusive approach to lifelong learning in cities – one that is sensitive to a spectrum of sometimes cross-cutting vulnerabilities in the city.

In the process of making this call for inclusive lifelong learning in cities, this publication draws and expands on existing concepts associated with the notion of inclusive lifelong learning and sustainable cities, such as social inclusion and, as a major contributory factor to social inclusion, inclusive education. For the latter, there is a well-established discourse championed by *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*, adopted in 1994 at the World Conference on Special Needs Education,<sup>4</sup> and – 25 years later – debated during UNESCO’s International Forum on Inclusion and Equity in Education, which took place in 2019 in Cali, Colombia. The event marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the World Conference and provided a platform for participants to discuss inclusive education and the capacity of schools to adequately accommodate and, indeed, embrace special educational needs.<sup>5</sup> This discourse on inclusive education mainly concerns the formal education system. At the city level, social inclusion aligns with accessibility, or the imperative that cities develop their physical infrastructure so that all citizens can access public spaces.

Therefore, the concepts of inclusive education and social inclusion are founded on principles of access and involvement. On the one hand, social inclusion denotes the accessibility of public services and activities to all and the involvement of all in decision-making processes. Inclusive education, meanwhile, refers to the accessibility of learning opportunities to all and the involvement of individual learners, families and communities in decision-making processes. Access is the foundation of inclusion as it ensures the

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4 UNESCO and Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia. 1994. *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. [pdf] Paris, UNESCO. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000098427> [Accessed 19 September 2019].

5 Further information about the conference, including the conference documents, can be found at: <https://www.sdg4education2030.org/international-forum-inclusion-and-equity-education-11-13-september-2019-cali-colombia> [Accessed 19 September 2019].

presence of learners. Participation requires that learners are not only present but actively contribute or respond to learning opportunities. Involvement goes further and demands that learners are not merely subjects who 'receive' learning but are co-constructors of the learning opportunities from which they benefit.

Core dimensions of lifelong learning and learning cities harmonize conceptually with inclusion through the access, participation and involvement of all learners. By its very nature, lifelong learning is all-encompassing and holistic. Learning cities are action-orientated intermediaries of lifelong learning: they translate the vision of lifelong learning for all into practical, people-centred measures to sustainably develop urban environments. Through participatory cross-sectoral governance structures and multi-stakeholder involvement – both of which must extend to the level of the local citizen – learning cities support social inclusion and inclusive education.

These two strands of discourse tell us much of what we already know about inclusive learning in cities. However, this publication's comprehensive overview of policies and practices, as well as its rich discussions around the vulnerabilities at which these interventions are targeted, precipitates a more holistic understanding of inclusion in cities. Inclusive lifelong learning means broadening inclusive education in formal schooling to inclusive learning in all modalities (formal, non-formal and informal), and expanding cities' responsibility for inclusion from the improvement of physical infrastructure to the cultivation of social inclusion across all spheres and spaces, whether in the family, workplace, community space, digital platform, or beyond.

# Chapter 1

## → Sustainable learning cities: Inclusion, equity and lifelong learning

### Introduction

This chapter, written as a background paper for the fourth International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC 4), which focused on the theme of ‘Inclusion – A principle for lifelong learning and sustainable cities’, seeks to set out the underlying concepts that pertain to educational and social inclusion, equity, lifelong learning and learning cities, linking these to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their targets. Specifically, it considers a specific set of vulnerable groups that have been defined by UNESCO for the purpose of this analysis: migrants, young people, the digitally excluded, people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and slums, and the disabled.

Traditionally there have been two dominant themes associated with lifelong learning. First, there has been a focus on the issue of social justice and social inclusion. Particular groups have been systematically excluded from educational opportunity by

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<sup>6</sup> Material within this briefing paper has, inter alia, been informed by the work of the Urban Big Data Centre funded by ESRC grants ES/S007105/1 and ES/L011921/1; the GCRF Centre for Sustainable, Healthy and Learning Cities funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) grant ES/PO11020/1; and the Strengthening Urban Engagement of Universities in Asia and Africa (SUEUAA) project funded by the British Academy grant CI170271. The authors wish to express thanks to Peter Kearns, who commented on an earlier draft of the paper, and Lisa Helps, Mayor of Victoria, British Columbia, for her particular contribution.

virtue of their social status, race and ethnicity, gender, disability or geographical location. Many are disadvantaged in multiple ways. Second, from an economic perspective, there have been arguments that competition in a global market is compromised because skills deficits exist, and that the role of lifelong learning is to produce more well-qualified individuals for the labour market. These themes are often and erroneously posited as being dichotomous. The concept of lifelong learning, while commonly used in policy rhetoric, has also been subject to debate and contestation as to purpose over the past three decades. A prominent argument for lifelong learning is that it promotes social inclusion; alternative conceptions have viewed it as a form of social control and as being too tied to the development of human capital within the knowledge economy.

Learning cities (and regions) have emerged as a vehicle to drive place-based lifelong learning across the lifespan through formal, non-formal and informal means. Learning cities and regions have been conceived not only as a means to promote the inclusion of disadvantaged groups, but also as a means to foster the development of learning infrastructure to generate inward investment and facilitate business development.

It is also important to set the concept of learning cities against a number of other urban initiatives, including smart cities, educating cities and healthy cities, in order to argue for its distinctiveness. 'Inclusion', in the context of education, refers to those under-represented by virtue of policies of governments and institutions, and their individual and situational characteristics. 'Equity' in this context suggests that systems of education and institutions of learning should be fair in relation to access, provide appropriate support upon entry, and create pathways to equitable outcomes of the learning that is provided. Fair and equitable systems should reflect the nature of the population served.

'Fair and equitable systems should reflect the nature of the population served.'

We will therefore review a range of urbanization models around the world and consider the approaches that have been taken at city level to facilitate inclusion, linking these to the conceptual

framework introduced below. We will thus contextualize approaches to providing learning opportunities for diverse groups in urban settings in terms of regulatory and policy frameworks (i.e. legislation, regulation, policy, governance, finance and funding) and the structural and functional diversity of the formal, non-formal and informal learning system, a framework previously adopted in analysing access to higher education (Osborne, Rimmer and Houston, 2015). Key aspects of approaches to learning are (1) flexibility of the learning offer in terms of location (e.g. within formal institutions, workplaces, communities and virtual means), (2) mode (full-time, part-time, blended); (3) means of accreditation; and (4) the extent to which learners are active co-constructors of their learning programmes based on their own demands and self-identified needs. We will draw from case studies of learning cities that are part of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) and which have received a UNESCO Learning City Award, as well as from the PASCAL Learning Cities Network (LCN)<sup>7</sup> and from the initiatives of other cities around the world.

We then look internationally at specific examples of lifelong learning policies and practices at city level (including within the context of learning city initiatives) that are successfully addressing the needs of vulnerable groups. We paid particular attention to approaches that may have transferability to other contexts, bearing in mind that many initiatives are place-specific and the dangers of naïve transnational borrowing of policies and practices. This will be followed by a section that considers how data are gathered to assess success, or otherwise, at local government level, and the monitoring mechanisms used by cities. This section will also address the process and consequences of identifying vulnerable groups, and the implications that collected data have for urban policies.

In the concluding remarks, we identify key issues and make recommendations for policy-makers and practitioners who are seeking to provide more equitable access to lifelong learning in urban settings.

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<sup>7</sup> See <http://lcn.pascalobservatory.org> [Accessed 3 February 2021].



## A conceptual framework

Social inclusion, according to Bynner (2000), is a concept first coined in France to describe how people with disabilities are restricted in enjoying full citizenship and rights. He links social inclusion to other concepts and attributes: risks, protection, vulnerability and resilience. The effect of these factors on life chances are determined by a combination of individual and social factors, and are further mediated by policies at institutional and governmental level.

The concept of social inclusion is now used more extensively in education to describe how individuals in certain communities may encounter multiple forms of deprivation based on one or more characteristics. Gale (2020) also invokes the case of France when referring to the origins of inclusion in higher education from the 1970s onwards, when advocates called for ‘an inclusive social contract between the state and its citizens’. It is also important, as Gale states, to distinguish between inclusion in education and inclusive education. Inclusion in education refers to making existing provision more accessible to those who have been excluded, whereas a system of inclusive education is responsive and adaptive to the excluded.

For Gale, inclusive higher education includes consideration of ‘how students experience the higher education curriculum and which knowledge is included and how different knowledges are positioned in relation to one another’. Such ideas in higher education have also been expressed in terms of supply and demand by Murphy (2002), the distinction being between creating new ways to access existing provision and embracing structural, spatial, temporal and curricular flexibility. This flexibility might be expressed through a number of modifications of the institutional offer, such as its mode, location and, in alternative forms of assessment, the timing/accreditation of prior learning.

In compulsory schooling, a recent UNESCO (2017) guide, the content of which was coordinated by Mel Ainscow, overviews the

principles of an inclusive and equitable social system based on a four-pronged model of concepts, policy statements, structures and systems and practices. It contains case studies linked to each element of this model from around the world.

Most inclusion models largely focus on responses of the formal educational structure (schools, colleges and universities), and the degree to which they respond to demands and needs of citizens. Alternative conceptions focus on citizens working outside the confines of institutional constraints. This may be manifest through non-formal education or may be self-directed, wherein citizen groups actively (co-)construct their own learning provision, with or without institutional collaboration. Kane (2012), for example, cites many forms of popular education in Latin America that are associated with social movements, some of which have developed extensive and highly organized education provision with varying degrees of support from the state (the various *Universidad Campesina* [Peasant University] groups are a good example of this).

Examples such as these, which are formulated on the empowerment of the poor and marginalized, are found elsewhere in the world. Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), based in India, is a good case in point: it promotes participatory methods which team individuals with organizations in order to transform relationships between the excluded poor and those in positions of power and authority.<sup>8</sup> PRIA's Engaged Citizens Responsive City (ECRC) project, for example, partners local citizens with municipal authorities in three Indian cities – Ajmer, Jhansi and Muzaffarpur – to improve access to sanitation services at local level in line with SDG 6, which calls on countries to 'ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all' (UN, 2015).<sup>9</sup> These types of approaches require dialogue not just with city authorities but recognition of the value of the indigenous knowledge particular to specific cultures and societies (Odora-Hoppers, 2002; Hall and Tandon, 2013).

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<sup>8</sup> To find out more about PRIA's work, visit <http://pria.org> [Accessed 3 February 2021].

<sup>9</sup> To read more about the ECRC project, visit <https://www.pria.org/featuredstory-establishing-partnerships-between-civil-society-and-municipalities-to-achieve-sdgs-44-206> [Accessed 15 July 2019].

Fitzgerald and Zientek (2015, p. 24) also make an explicit link between community-engaged scholarship and learning cities/regions. In Victoria, British Columbia, for example, the ethos of the city is based on community-based learning opportunities, such as citizens' involvement in the way the local parks are designed and in the development of the city's four-year strategic plan. Regarding the latter, one of the key learning opportunities is provided through the City of Victoria Youth Council, one of Victoria's learning city initiatives, and its participatory budget process, which is led by youth with city support (see <https://cvyc.ca/pb/>). But perhaps the Victoria's most powerful learning initiative is its reconciliation work with the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, on whose territory the city is built (see <http://www.victoria.ca/reconciliation>). An indigenous-led and indigenous-informed process, it asks the city to rethink the very ways in which it governs. In late 2019, the city created the Victoria Reconciliation Dialogues in order to bring the community into the conversation and to further its community-wide reconciliation efforts. This work relates directly to the city's 2019–2022 Strategic Plan, namely Strategic Objective 2: Reconciliation and Indigenous Relations; 2019 Action 1: Create the Victoria Reconciliation Dialogues (City of Victoria, 2019, p. 17). It also draws on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action (TRC, 2015).

For the purpose of this chapter, we consider the excluded to be individuals and groups that may be systemically under-represented by virtue of policies and practices at various levels of government (national, region and local) and of institutions. This may be as a result of their situational characteristics, which includes gender, race and ethnicity, age, disability, migrant/refugee status, socio-economic class/status, caste, location and access to digital resources. The range of such factors that may impinge on social inclusion is thus multifaceted and, in addition to those associated with policies and situation, we must layer personal psychological characteristics and family/home circumstances. It is particularly important to understand that those who experience social exclusion may do so for multiple reasons; for example, women and girls may experience exclusion by virtue of their sex, but this may be accen-

tuated by race, class, sexual orientation, disability and a range of other characteristics. Furthermore, many of the labels attributed to individuals assumes a homogeneity of experience; in the field of education, for example, there is often reference to ‘minority ethnic groups’ and their exclusion, but this is a broad-brush characterization of many such groups, some experiencing exclusion more so than others. It is therefore important that policies and practices that seek to combat exclusion at city level are framed in a holistic fashion, in terms both of those groups that are targeted and in the domains covered. This holistic approach is advocated for example in the PASCAL Observatory’s EcCoWell model that is described later in this chapter.

When considering the social inclusion of young people in their transition from school to work, Bynner and Parsons (2002) refer not only to the influences of human capital (Becker, 1994), social capital (Coleman, 1998), cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), and biological and health factors, but also invoke identity capital (Côté, 1997). They argue that while the possession of human capital, which is manifested in skills and qualifications, serves as a protective factor against being excluded, this may not be enough to secure a positive life course. Social capital (social support networks and connections), cultural capital (the accumulated collection of knowledge, behaviours and skills), and biological and health factors also play an important role in determining trajectories. Identity capital for Côté (2002, p. 5) considers human, social and cultural capital, and layers the opportunities and obstacles that these create with individualized agentic potential.

For Bynner (2000, p. 21) the ‘social exclusion process ... is one of predictability qualified by complexity... [with] ... no predictable linear path from one kind of social exclusion outcome to another.’ In other words, although certain circumstances provide a greater likelihood of social exclusion, it is not inevitable and processes of exclusion may be reversible. Thus, while we cannot ignore long-standing barriers to inclusion that are structurally determined, and life circumstances which disproportionately affect certain groups, nor can we ignore personal agency.

This is, in part, where inclusion in education comes into play and, later in the life course, lifelong learning opportunity. For UNESCO and IBE (2008), inclusive education is ‘an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination’, with a focus in particular ‘on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalization, exclusion or under-achievement’ (IBE–UNESCO, 2016).

The conception of social inclusion gains further momentum with the globalization of information and knowledge, which has transformed the concept of learning. We now inhabit a public realm whereby, with the appropriate communications technology, much of the information contained in libraries, archives and data banks is available to all, independent of temporal or locational constraints (Aspin et al., 2012, p. 24). There is, of course, the matter of digital inclusion – the huge caveat of who can access this information – to which we will look at later.

The link between lifelong learning and inclusion in education is long-standing and, in the twentieth century, was articulated by Hutchins (1970) through the concept of the learning society – the need for which, he argued, was down to the inadequacy of the

‘The conception of social inclusion gains further momentum with the globalization of information and knowledge, which has transformed the concept of learning.’

formal system to respond to the demands of rapid change, and opportunities being limited to the privileged. He called for continuous and inclusive education, and was one of the first to highlight the role of the city in promoting this, citing the accomplishments of ancient Athens, where education was not a segregated activity, conducted for certain hours, in certain places, at a certain time of life. It was the aim of the society. The city educated the man. The Athenian was educated by culture, by *paideia* (*ibid.*, p. 133).

The idea of the learning society was taken forward further in UNESCO's highly influential Faure Report (Faure et al., 1972), and lifelong learning emerged as an approach to its realization later in the decade. However, it was not long before the positive connotations of learning throughout the life course as a means for individuals to self-direct and control their learning choices was complemented by a critical discourse. Lifelong learning was also associated with fears about the marketization and globalization of education and the coercive forces of governments (see, for example, Husén, 1986; Raggett, Edwards and Small, 1995; Jarvis, 2007). The positive connotations and emancipatory nature of conceptions of the learning society were thus counterbalanced by concerns about the use of lifelong learning as a control mechanism of the state in its pursuit of economic imperatives.

Lifelong learning was a slow burner until the last decade of the twentieth century when it became a significant policy driver for education and training, notably after a second influential UNESCO report, Delors (Delors et al., 1996), which explicitly was conceived around 'learning throughout life' and four pillars of learning: to know, to do, to be, and to live together.<sup>10</sup> The concept has evolved historically; it grew from notions such as 'recurrent education', 'continuing education', 'adult basic education' and 'lifelong education', but generally recognizes that learning is not confined to childhood or to the classroom but takes place throughout life and in a variety of situations (Carlsen, 2013, p. 311).

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<sup>10</sup> See also, among others, Bagnall, 2001; Boshier, 2001; Coffield, 2000 and Duke, 2001, for accounts of the development of lifelong learning during this period.

While in its early iterations lifelong learning was closely associated with adult education and a concern with social purpose, arguably, as Osborne (2003) suggests, in later incarnations it 'lost any narrow definition around age, purpose or location'. In the twenty-first century, lifelong learning has become synonymous with learning across the lifespan, starting from the early years; related to all spheres of life; and learning within various locations, including the home, the workplace and in leisure activities. As such, it has assumed a life-wide dimension. In other words, it is not confined to formal schooling but takes place in multiple settings: at home; in the community; on the playground; in workplaces, sports fields; through mass media, play, conversation, debate, reading, writing, teaching, problem solving, social participation, social services, travel, ICT use, and so on (UIL, 2011, p. 45).

It would be difficult now to find a nation that does not have a lifelong learning policy, at least in the form of an acknowledgment that flexible learning opportunities should be provided to all citizens from cradle to grave. More uncommon are countries that have an overarching national lifelong learning policy or, even rarer, legislation for lifelong learning. During the last decade, lifelong learning has developed global resonance, having been highlighted as a principal component of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (UNESCO, 2016). The focus of SDG 4 is on equitable access to learning at all levels throughout the life course, and that this should be a universal aspiration for all countries; this contrasts significantly with the preceding United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the pre-2015 Education for All (EFA) agenda (UNESCO, 2000 and 2002), which focused primarily on access to primary schooling, completion of basic education, and a narrow definition of learning outcomes concerned mainly with human capital development with a focus on the Global South.

Yet, despite our current wide-ranging conception of lifelong learning, much of the policy rhetoric has been economic, focusing on

individual skills and employability and the need for individuals to adapt to the demands of global capitalism. Morgan-Klein and Osborne (2007) speak of the notion of the ‘self-optimizing entrepreneurial self, found in lifelong learning discourses’, and, as a result, policies have been without the power to adequately deliver social inclusion or social cohesion. This is perhaps unduly pessimistic – certainly in intention, social purpose has been at the core of many lifelong learning initiatives, even if in parallel with the economic. It would indeed be wrong to suggest social and economic imperatives are dichotomous; those who are socially excluded typically identify improved economic outcomes for themselves, their family and their community among the principal reason for engaging in learning, as delineated in a recent report from the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Department of Education, 2018).

An early adopter of the term ‘life-wide learning’ was the European Commission (EC) in its Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, which suggested that the concept enriches the picture by drawing attention to the spread of learning, which can take place across the full range of our lives at any one stage in our lives. The ‘life-wide’ dimension brings the complementarity of formal, non-formal and informal learning into sharper focus. It reminds us that useful and enjoyable learning can and does take place in the family, in leisure time, in community life and in daily work life (EC, 2000, p. 8).

As Regmi noted (2015, p. 135), the EC regarded lifelong learning as the most significant strategy for accelerating economic growth, creating jobs and becoming the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world; moreover, there was an acknowledgement that the purpose of lifelong learning goes beyond this vision and encompasses a humanistic perspective with the goal of creating a better world by alleviating social inequalities and injustices. The target for the EC was not simply to promote international competitiveness by ‘producing a skilled and competent workforce, but rather to strengthen cooperation, coordination and collaboration among the members of a community. It emphasizes collectivism over individualism’ (ibid., p. 142). Thus,



lifelong learning focuses on the identification and development of learning opportunities in different contexts together with the encouragement of non-participants to engage with such opportunities (Rogers, 2006, p. 126).

‘Collectivism’ is in fact a thread within lifelong learning that is found in other parts of the world. For example, a recent review of community learning centres (CLCs) in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam (NILE and UIL, 2017), which were carried out as part of the follow-up activities of CONFINTEA VI in Asia and the Pacific region, turned up many examples of local, often citizen-led and NGO-convened, collective actions. Makino (2013, p. 446) has also argued that many Asian learning city initiatives are based upon a community relations model, and Preece (2009, 2011) draws on the African concept of ubuntu and similar concepts that reflect a particular form of ‘humanness’ that distinguishes African perspectives, which, among others, have been inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and Julius Nyerere.

But lest we become sanguine that economic perspectives are not pervasive, Osborne and Borkowska (2017) cite many examples from the Asia-Pacific region that also focus on economic imperatives. Some would even argue that the advent of lifelong learning has been a backwards step. Han and Makino (2013) cite the case of Japan, where, following the economic collapse at the end of the 1980s, lifelong learning shifted its focus from being about community building to an individualized model of the self-organizing individual.

The EC, at the same time as it was developing its lifelong learning policies in the late part of the twentieth century, was also among the first supranational organizations to make the link between lifelong learning and the development of place. It did this through its work in Europe promoting the ‘learning regions’ concept, which championed the idea of lifelong learning as a key driver for local and regional regeneration. Furthermore, in its regional dimension of lifelong learning (‘R3L’) initiative, the Commission argued that,

of all stakeholders, the most important are local and regional authorities, and called for:the mobilisation of all 'players' involved in ascertaining learning needs, opening up learning opportunities for people of all ages, ensuring the quality of education and training provision, and making sure that people are given credit for their knowledge, skills and competences, wherever and however these may have been acquired (EC, 2002).

In the city of Pécs, Hungary, the University of Pécs was an early initiator of learning region and learning city projects. It was a partner in initiatives funded through the European Commission, including EUROlocal (coordinated by the University of Glasgow) and R3L+ (coordinated by Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich), and facilitated the PASCAL Universities' Regional Engagement (PURE) projects in the South Transdanubian region. One of the recommendations of these projects was that county and city authorities, along with the region's two universities, work together to create a joint future action plan. An immediate outcome was the Pécs Learning City-Region Forum, which laid the foundation for the establishment of the Pécs Learning Festival in 2016 and the city winning the UNESCO Learning City Award in 2017.

The first Pécs Learning Festival in 2017 involved 73 organizations offering 141 programmes at 11 sites, which in turn attracted over 3,000 participants. One year later, in 2018, the festival welcomed over 8,000 participants. The city has also worked to promote adult learning, with informal courses enjoying considerable success and scientific programmes attracting around 15,000 participants each year. Moreover, Pécs' 'senior academy' project provides more than 500 older learners per year an opportunity to improve their skills and knowledge. Through a broad range of learning activities and efficient administrative structures, the city has succeeded in creating a shared culture of lifelong learning among its citizens.

There are several historical accounts of the role of urban settings as vehicles for learning. As Glaeser (2011) notes, 'from classical Athens to eight-century Baghdad to Nagasaki, cities have always

been the most effective way to transfer knowledge between civilisations' (p. 24). Specifically, with relation to the learning region, which pre-dates many learning city developments and which derives from the regional innovation thinking of economic geographers, Rutten and Boekema (2007) provide a comprehensive overview, attributing Storper (1993), Florida (1995), Asheim (1996) and Morgan (1997) with providing the foundations for the concept. Asheim (2012) revisited this literature and summarized three requisites for a learning region:

- Cooperation and collective learning in regional clusters and networks in order to promote the innovativeness and competitiveness of firms and regions;
- A socially and territorially embedded, interactive learning process, making knowledge the most fundamental resource and learning the most important process;
- Regionally based development coalitions (ibid., p. 994).

Such perspectives are rooted in the aim to further economic development, job creation and innovation, with the bonus of enhancing social cohesion. They also underpin the link between learning cities and entrepreneurship which has been promoted and extended by the PASCAL Observatory<sup>11</sup> and the work of James, Preece and Valdés-Cotera (2018). The same ideas can be found in some of the cities that have received the UNESCO Learning City Award; for example, administrators in Hangzhou, People's Republic of China, are of the belief that 'the more the city does to create a thriving learning environment for its citizens, the more educated and creative its workforce becomes. At the same time, more exciting job opportunities become available as new and innovative companies are established' (UIL, 2017c, p. 47).

The learning city as a concept has commonalities with the learning region, not least because both consider the economic implications of place-based learning strategies. However, learning city initiatives can be distinguished not simply by their implied different geographical boundaries but by the consideration of a

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11 This strand of PASCAL's work can be found at <http://pobs.cc/15j7o>.

wider range of stakeholders, activities and purposes that extend well beyond those that are economically instrumental (Longworth and Osborne, 2010, p. 373). In revisiting the EcCoWell model developed by the PASCAL Observatory, a recent publication by Kearns and Reghenzani-Kearns (2019) provides a comprehensive overview of the breadth that underpins the concept of a learning city.

EcCoWell<sup>12</sup> explicitly calls for an integrated approach to learning city development that acknowledges the interconnectedness of environmental, economic, community, cultural, and health and well-being factors as they impinge on learning. This approach has expanded to incorporate other elements, including spirituality, and is found in two major initiatives of PASCAL: PIE (PASCAL International Exchanges) and the PASCAL Learning Cities Network (LCN).<sup>13</sup> In this context, Kearns and Reghenzani-Kearns make a link to UIL's *Cork Call to Action for Learning Cities* of 2017, which is built around the three themes of (1) green, healthy learning; (2) inclusion and equity; and (3) decent work and entrepreneurship, and which was inspired by the EcCoWell model within PIE, and to SDGs 3, 4, 5 and 11. In terms of holistic factors that we might also take into account are spatial dimensions (often ignored in the learning literature), including the nature, cost and availability of transport infrastructure (Thakuria et al., 2020).

The City of Cork, Republic of Ireland, has sought to enhance its citizens' quality of life, including that of its migrant and refugee population, by tackling challenges such as poverty, social exclusion and unemployment through high-quality, local learning opportunities. The Cork City Development Plan 2015–2021 contemplates the importance of building human capital to stimulate the city's economic and social development while reaffirming its commitment to 'work with the education and training sectors in order to meet the needs of existing and future businesses' (UIL and NILE, 2015, p. 76). The city's commitment to becoming an inclusive city has been tangible since its first Lifelong Learning Festival in 2011.

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<sup>12</sup> Ec = ecology and economy; Co = community and culture; Well = well-being and lifelong learning  
<sup>13</sup> See <http://pie.pascalobservatory.com> and <http://lcn.pascalobservatory.com>.

This now-annual celebration began with some 65 events over two days but quickly became a week-long celebration and has grown to now include more than 500 events over eight days. The festival has also inspired replica events in cities such as Limerick (Ireland), Burnaby (Canada), Wyndham (Australia) and Espoo (Finland), among others.

Similar initiatives can be found on all continents and have been reported in considerable depth in various parts of Africa (Walters, 2009; Biao, Esaete and Oonyu, 2013; Biao, 2019), Asia (Han and Makino, 2013; Ju, 2011; Lee, 2013; Li, 2011; Osborne and Borkowska, 2017), Australia (Kearns, 2015), Europe (Jordan, Longworth and Osborne, 2014) and North America (Florida, 2008; Faris, 2005). More recently, a number of case studies have been highlighted by UNESCO (UIL and NILE, 2015; UIL, 2017c) for cities that have received Learning City Awards.

### *Urban policy and planning*

It is important to situate learning city development within the broader debate of urban policy and development and to identify the connection to sustainable development. In this section, we assess urban policy needs at the local level. We also consider the fundamental conditions for the implementation of learning city initiatives and determine the most successful organizational frameworks.

### *Sustainable development and cities*

Sustainable development recognizes that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, combating inequality within and among countries, preserving the planet, creating inclusive and sustainable economic growth and fostering social inclusion are interdependent (UN, 2015). Urbanization can help drive sustainable development; however, within cities, poverty and inequality are at their most acute and, in lower- and middle-income countries, rapid growth due in part to rural-urban migration poses challenges of global proportions. As the Centre for Sustainable, Healthy and Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods (SHLC) at the University of Glasgow argues and demonstrates in case studies of 14 cities

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in Asia and Africa,<sup>14</sup> responding to the dualities of urbanization requires an understanding of the complex relations between sustainable cities and a number of underlying factors, most notably education and health. Sustainable cities depend to a considerable extent on a population with the resilience and resources that health brings, and on relevant learning. Equally, access to health-care and quality education depend on the sustainable development of cities and the neighbourhoods within them.

The unequal distribution of opportunities within an urban population is of acute concern. Prosperity, for example, is often confined to a particular group, with other sections of urban society facing disproportionately high levels of poverty, violence and environmental risk. Many global organizations focused on urbanization agree that reducing inequality within cities is a priority. The relationship between place, learning, health and quality of life is well documented in both developed (Fitzpatrick and LaGory, 2011) and developing countries (Smit et al., 2014). Western models concerning these relationships, however, capture neither the realities of the Global South nor the significance of spirituality, and often ignore the importance of health at the individual, family and community relationship level.

Global urban policies for developing countries tend to operate at a very general level; research and understanding of urbanization are fragmented and focus mainly on conditions in slum areas; and sustainable development debates tend to emphasize the physical and environmental aspects of urbanization on a macro rather than micro scale. Moreover, international policy-makers often know little about the specific social, economic and physical structures of fast-growing cities in developing countries and how they are changing, especially at the neighbourhood level. There are many different types of urban neighbourhoods emerging in fast-growing cities – some are successful and sustainable alternatives to slum dwelling.

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14 See <http://www.centreforsustainablecities.ac.uk/research/case-studies> for case studies of Dhaka and Khulna in Bangladesh, Datong and Chongqing in China, Delhi and Madurai in India, Batangas City and Manila in the Philippines, Huye and Kigali in Rwanda, Johannesburg and Cape Town in South Africa, and Dar es Salaam and Ifakara in the United Republic of Tanzania.

When considering the implementation of learning city initiatives, the varying circumstances of each city must be acknowledged. Within cities, there may be great variation between neighbourhoods. Therefore, to provide effective learning opportunities, ‘each country will have to develop its unique strategy, given the significant differences that exist in the political, economic, social and educational contexts’ (Bengtsson, 2013, p. 346). In this sense, ‘a learning city, town or region recognizes and understands the key role of learning in the development of basic prosperity, social stability and personal fulfilment, and mobilizes all its human, physical and financial resources creatively and sensitively to develop the full human potential of all its citizens’ (Longworth, 1999, p. 4). In the era of urbanization, it is necessary to develop educational strategies at the local level to provide citizens with improved learning opportunities for their social development, especially for marginalized citizens in areas of deprivation.

Place is a vital element that informs educational opportunity. Kintrea (2018) has comprehensively reviewed the literature concerning place-based factors at the neighbourhood level. Others – including (2016), who, in a meta-analysis of 88 studies in the Global North, provide compelling evidence of the negative effect of poverty – aimed to quantify the impact of living in a disadvantaged area on educational attainment.

#### *Fundamental conditions and organizational structures*

The implication of a particular setting on educational opportunity is conditional on many factors and can only be understood by considering many variables. UIL’s (2013) framework provides clear guidance on the three fundamental conditions for learning city development: (1) strong political will and commitment; (2) governance and participation of all stakeholders; and (3) mobilization and utilization of resources. The third condition takes into account regulatory and policy frameworks (i.e. legislation, regulation, policies, governance and funding) and the structural and functional diversity of formal, non-formal and informal learning systems. The first Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) considered the extent to which appropriate existing policies facilitate

‘A learning city, town or region recognizes and understands the key role of learning in the development of basic prosperity, social stability and personal fulfilment, and mobilizes all its human, physical and financial resources creatively and sensitively to develop the full human potential of all its citizens.’

increased participation in lifelong learning education and training systems, concluding that ‘there are wide gaps between legislation, policy and implementation, with weak relationships between formal policy-making and practice’ (UIL, 2009, p. 29). Such reflections are also important when considering initiatives framed under learning city development.

Beyond these frameworks, it is important to consider existing structures and the extent to which they can respond to the challenges of delivering provision that meets needs and demands. A system may be structurally diverse in that it contains a range of institutions, but may also be functionally narrow. Other obvious permutations exist. For example, we observe that in some learning city developments, the policies are linked strongly to clear legislation, either at a national or regional level. That is at its most transparent in the Republic of Korea (ROK), where the Lifelong Education Act of 2008 and the establishment of the National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE) has created a systematic place-based learning city structure.

The NILE principle is that the development of lifelong learning opportunities should be a collaborative effort among multiple stakeholders at three geographical levels: provincial, city/county/district, and town neighbourhood. Han and Makino (2013) note that the policies in the ROK are designed centrally (by NILE) but organized locally. NILE develops lifelong education programmes, trains professionals, builds networks, supports local institutes, operates the lifelong education system, and established a master plan for expanding national lifelong education. NILE not only promotes the benefits of lifelong learning nationally but also encourages other countries and experts to embrace the lifelong learning approach. To date, it has published four National Lifelong Learning Promotion Plans to share its vision of lifelong learning and help local and international authorities gain strategic insight. The learning city initiative in the ROK has been so successful that 44 cities have so far joined the UNESCO GNLC and, in 2015, NILE and UIL published *Unlocking the Potential of Urban Communities: Case Studies of Twelve Learning Cities* (UIL and NILE, 2015) to



showcase good practice and lessons learned from cities around the world.

The use of a particular form of institution to lead learning city development is common, but it need not be a formal education provider. For example, in Canada and Australia, the city library has led coordination of developments in cities such as Edmonton, Vancouver and Victoria in Canada, and Hume and Brimbank in Australia (see Faris, 2004).

Frequently, however, interventions are instrumental. For example, policy responses to youth unemployment tend to emphasize the economic benefits of learning under the assumption that better-educated countries also tend to be or become wealthier (Aspin et al., 2012, p. 184). In many cities, lifelong learning is perceived as a solution to problems that occur as a result of the processes of modern industrialization, but there are many exceptions to this. There are also notions of wider learning benefits, including health and well-being, and environmental dimensions. This is illustrated both in the Cities of Migration<sup>15</sup> network established by Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada, which at its core seeks the building of inclusive cities that engage a range of stakeholders in integrating urban migrants, and the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities programme,<sup>16</sup> which has sought to assess how cities can include migrants and minority groups and treat them as an asset rather than a threat.

## Local implementation of lifelong learning in cities

In this section, we consider cases that focus on migrants, youth, the digitally excluded, people living in slums and deprived neighbourhoods, and people living with disabilities. However, we do not restrict ourselves only to these domains; instead, we look at a wide range of initiatives from around the world, including those from cities that have received the UNESCO Learning City Award; cities involved in PASCAL Observatory initiatives, including PIE and

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<sup>15</sup> See <https://citiesofmigration.ca>

<sup>16</sup> See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/>

LCN; as well as cities invested in other projects, for example two recent ones with a focus on global challenges.

The first of these projects is the Sustainable, Healthy and Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods (SHLC) initiative, funded through investment (GBP 7 million) by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) through its Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF). SHLC is coordinated by the University of Glasgow and includes partners in seven countries (Bangladesh, China, India, the Philippines, Rwanda, South Africa and United Republic of Tanzania) in a major five-year programme. The second is Strengthening Urban Engagement of Universities in Africa and Asia (SUEUAA), which covers six cities in six low-income countries: Sanandaj, Islamic Republic of Iran; Duhok, Iraq; Manila, Philippines; Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania; Johannesburg, South Africa; and Harare, Zimbabwe. SUEUAA is funded by the British Academy under the Cities and Infrastructure programme of the GCRF.<sup>17</sup>

In this section, we seek to illustrate how cities (whether designated learning cities or not) provide lifelong learning opportunities for all ages and educational levels through formal, non-formal and informal delivery mechanisms, using multiple and flexible learning pathways, entry points and re-entry points (UIL, 2017b, p. 12). The approaches adopted by local governments to provide lifelong learning opportunities vary significantly across countries and regions, and, as we have previously argued, depend on the institutional mechanisms, legislative frameworks, resources and challenges identified by each city. Many innovations are holistic in nature and organized centrally with local implementation at the community level. In China, much like in the Republic of Korea, a community education model is the basis for many learning city developments. For Han and Makino (2013), this model has two facets: on the one hand, it is a management tool to increase social integration at the community level; on the other, it allows citizens to utilize learning as a means to develop a sense of community ownership and improve their quality of life.

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17 See <http://www.centreforsustainablecities.ac.uk> and <http://sueuaa.org>

In Australia, governments have harnessed the potential of community-based delivery to address the learning needs of disadvantaged, non-participant groups and to help redress skills shortages and strengthen community cohesion (Aspin et al., 2012, p. 629). By improving literacy and numeracy, the Council of Australian Governments aims to increase skill levels among the existing working population and to expand workforce participation, particularly among targeted groups such as the long-term unemployed, older people, and women (ibid., p. 633). Although unemployment rates and skill deficits are major concerns in Australia, these are not the only challenges to be tackled. In the City of Melton, a 2015 Learning City Award recipient, a Community Learning Board promotes quality lifelong learning opportunities to improve people's lives and the community's social and economic well-being (UNESCO/NILE, 2015, p. 11). Apart from creating links between training opportunities and employment, the board also aims to improve access to learning for indigenous peoples, refugees, and people with disabilities (ibid., p. 19).

Meanwhile, the megacity of Beijing, People's Republic of China, launched its holistic learning city programme as a concrete response to the city's economic, environmental, demographic and social challenges arising from rapid urbanization and economic development. The city authority had struggled to find solutions to the severe environmental damage caused by Beijing's dramatic economic development; therefore, the aim of the programme is to identify sustainable ways to achieve economic growth (ibid., p. 36). Starting points for holistic learning city interventions differ. Using environmental challenges as a basis, N'Zérékoré in Guinea, for example, has developed strategies to create an integrative lifelong learning-oriented environment, and 'has set up designated activity zones across the city to inform and train the population about environmental and public hygiene' (UNESCO, 2017c, p. 84).

### *Lifelong cities and migration*

Migration can be understood as a response to a wide range of factors and circumstances that have an impact on the decision to move. It may be transnational or internal. It is a vital urban

issue, since most migrants are destined for cities, for it is in the city that their human capital is most rewarded (IOM, 2018, p. 225). Migration and urbanization are closely related, with the numbers so high in some places that many cities are challenged to manage the rapid growth of their populations (ibid, p. 227). Globally, there are over 258 million migrants living outside of their country of birth, of which 68.5 million are forcibly displaced migrants, including 40 million internally displaced persons, 25.4 million refugees (over half of whom are under 18), and 3.1 million asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2018).

In Lee's (1966) model, the reasons for migration have been categorized as follows: environmental, economic, cultural and socio-political. These areas can be viewed as being 'push' factors (reasons that force individuals to move due to the risk of staying) and 'pull' factors (aspects that attract individuals to move to access better conditions). Examples of push factors include conflict, drought, famine and war; pull factors include better economic opportunities, better housing and being in a peaceful area. A recent analysis within the SUEUAA project (Azizi et al., 2019) considered 'livelihood', 'conflict' and 'environmental' migration, and provides examples of urban responses.

Livelihood as a driver of migration is a response to the unevenness of the development process, and is the norm in much of Africa and South Asia, with a long history in many other countries (Siddiqui, 2005; McDowell and de Haan, 1997). Some of this migration, when internal, is circular rather than linear, with individuals moving back and forth from rural to urban settings. However, for the most part, the shift is permanent and contributes to significant increases in cities' populations. Conflict migration occurs when threats to security rise beyond the acceptable level (Raleigh, 2011), and is shaped by political insecurity and state fragility, with conflict causing economic underdevelopment and state militarization. Meanwhile, adverse effects of global warming and climate change (drought, desertification and rising sea levels) lead to an increasing scarcity of resources and generally intolerable living conditions. These factors contribute to

environmental migration. Livelihood, conflict and environmental factors may combine, which increases the complexity of their relationships with migration (Brzoska and Fröhlich, 2016). For example, conflict is often compounded by drought and other major weather events, which exacerbate issues of food production and livelihoods (IFPRI, 2018).

In terms of how migrants might be integrated into cities, there are many initiatives around the world. The Cities of Migration network provides examples of ‘good ideas’<sup>18</sup> for integrating migrants, with cases presented alphabetically and by region from Alaska to Wales. Cases in the realm of education include anti-racism, intercultural education and school-to-work transition. Meanwhile, the network’s Building Inclusive Cities (BIC) Learning Platform considers 10 dimensions of inclusivity: economic, cultural, social, health, education, political, civic, spatial, the role of media, and the general welcome ability of municipal institutions and public space.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the Council of Europe’s Intercultural Cities (ICC) programme provides examples of good practice in integration and fostering diversity in Europe and beyond,<sup>20</sup> and the Inclusive Auckland Framework<sup>21</sup> in the city of Auckland, New Zealand, is an example of a comprehensive holistic urban approach to diversity.

However, because of resource constraints, learning programmes funded by governments for migrants tend to be limited to language, cultural and employment training, while the broader educational needs of this group have been largely ignored. The examples that follow show forms that urban educational interventions for migrants might take, such as training, validation of qualifications, maintenance of identity, celebration of diversity, and addressing indirect effects.

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18 See <http://citiesofmigration.ca/good-ideas-in-integration/view-all-good-ideas/>.

19 See [https://citiesofmigration.ca/building-inclusive-cities/overview/#:~:text=The%20Building%20Inclusive%20Cities%20\(BIC,%2C%20civic%2C%20spatial%2C%20the%20role](https://citiesofmigration.ca/building-inclusive-cities/overview/#:~:text=The%20Building%20Inclusive%20Cities%20(BIC,%2C%20civic%2C%20spatial%2C%20the%20role)

20 See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities>

21 See <https://fyi.org.nz/request/8712/response/29007/attach/html/4/Inclusive%20Auckland%20Framework.pdf.html>.

### *Training provision*

Some cities have created specialized institutions offering formal training to migrants. For example, the city of Hangzhou in the People's Republic of China launched a particular form of vocational high school, the 'migrant college', which 'enables migrant workers to obtain professional qualifications, helping them to integrate into society' (UIL, 2017d, p. 17). In Hangzhou, migrant adults can attend a migrant college and participate in specific training workshops and courses created to meet the requirements of potential employers in the city. 'Learners who pass these courses receive an adult vocational high school qualification and professional certificates. Over the past five years, 128,500 people have obtained these dual certificates' (UIL, 2017c, p. 49). As part of the initiative, children of migrants are enrolled in the formal education system as standard students. By participating in training activities and specialized courses, 'learners who pass these courses receive an adult vocational high school qualification and professional certificates' (ibid.). Because of its efforts to provide ongoing learning opportunities for all its citizens, Hangzhou received the Learning City Award from UIL in 2017.

Migration has transformed the vision and composition of many cities all over the world, and challenges exist in both economically developed and poorer countries.

### *Validating prior learning*

One of the major challenges faced by external migrants is recognition of their qualifications, and 'finding ways of validating prior learning (both formal and non-formal learning) has been recognized as a tool for facilitating and promoting migrant inclusion in the labour market' (Morrice, Shan and Sprung, 2018, p. 130). The VINCE (Validation for Inclusion of New Citizens of Europe) project, funded by the European Commission, provides many examples and testimony from migrants and refugees on Europe's role in validating prior learning (VPL) across the EU and beyond. One good example of VPL highlighted by VINCE is the work of Lisbon City Council's Qualifica Centres in Portugal, which use methods based on Paulo Freire's ([1970] 1994) *Problematizing Pedagogy* and Marie-Christine Josso's (2000) *Histoire de Vie* to set learning in the

context of critically understanding the world and acknowledging life choices and experiences.<sup>22</sup>

### *Maintenance of identity and celebration of diversity*

In some cities that have received a UNESCO Learning City Award, we see a focus on migration issues. For example, in Finland, the city of Espoo's lifelong educational services plays a special role in helping immigrants settle into society while maintaining their own cultural identity (UIL and NILE, 2015, p. 61).

One of the first cities to receive the UNESCO Award was Cork in Ireland, the population of which has changed significantly over the past few years, due mainly to a dramatic increase in the number of people coming from Africa and Eastern Europe. Integrating these migrants into the city's life constitutes a significant challenge for local authorities. (ibid., p. 75). The city therefore has taken comprehensive steps to improve the quality of life for all citizens, including its migrant and refugee populations, and to tackle the causes of social exclusion, such as poverty and unemployment. Cork was the first Irish city to become a member of PIE, leading to its adoption of the EcCoWell, which promotes creative means of integrating thinking and planning across the fields of economics, the environment, health, learning and social inclusion (ibid., p. 77). Moreover, the city's Lifelong Learning Festival, hosted yearly since 2011, is a symbol of its long-standing commitment to inclusive learning (Kearns et al., 2013), and includes a wide variety of intercultural workshops and courses targeting this group on the basis that 'migrants from all parts of the world bring richness and diversity to the city' (Cork Lifelong Learning Festival, 2019, p. 32).

### *Addressing indirect effects*

In Manila, the capital of the Philippines, the SUEUAA project has identified a number of university activities developed as a result of needs assessments. Philippine Normal University, for example, offers literacy for informal settlers of the Baseco Compound in the areas of Tondo, Pandacan and Santa Ana at the city's harbour.

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22 See [https://vince.eucen.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/VINCE-VPL-Prize2019\\_Lisbon-PT\\_FINALIST.pdf](https://vince.eucen.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/VINCE-VPL-Prize2019_Lisbon-PT_FINALIST.pdf) [Accessed 15 July 2019].

Mapúa University, in collaboration with the city's Urban Settlements Office, has designed a reclamation settlement for informal settlers in Tondo, Manila's most densely packed slum district. De La Salle University has assisted the Manila Traffic and Parking Bureau in solving the heavy flow of traffic along the metropolitan area's Taft Avenue – a problem in part related to internal migration. St Scholastica's College has established a programme, From Streets to Strings, to teach street children how to play the violin; it also offers temporary lodgings for street families, enabling them to cook, bathe and wash their clothes. Adamson University has developed a chemical compound to clean the capital's waterways; this will benefit the city as a whole and especially the informal settlers who live along Manila's creeks. The Technological University of the Philippines offers technical and vocational courses for informal settlers in Ermita and Balic-Balic, while Far Eastern University offer peace literacy and livelihood projects to informal settlers in Sampaloc in the northeast of the capital. This is not an exhaustive list of activities, but it illustrates that the work of formal education in urban development can go well beyond the mere provision of learning opportunities and can address the indirect effects of urbanization, including environmental degradation.

## Learning cities and young people

In many parts of the world, youth unemployment is the focus of lifelong learning initiatives. According to Mourshed, Patel and Suder (2014), the issue of youth unemployment is most severe in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, while, in Europe, it is attributed to economic downturn from 2008 onwards. In the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries,<sup>23</sup> it was estimated that, in 2015, some 40 million young people – or around 15 per cent of these countries' 15- to 24-year-olds – were not in employment, education or training (NEET). Other initiatives, such as that of Inoue et al. (2015) for the World Bank, have focused on sub-Saharan Africa, where almost 50 per

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<sup>23</sup> For a list of OECD countries, visit <https://www.oecd.org/about/document/ratification-oecd-convention.htm>



cent of 12- to 24-year-olds (around 89 million people) are not in education or training.

Rates of unemployment are very high in some countries: in Greece, for example, the unemployment rate was 55 per cent in 2013. At the same time, employers claim difficulty finding desired skills among young people, and, according to Mourshed, Patel and Suder (2014, p. 20), this phenomenon is more common in countries with the highest unemployment rates, such as Greece. When examining individual countries more closely, it becomes clear that, just as with many other phenomena pertaining to learning, national statistics disguise detail within individual cities and regions, and that there are huge disparities between nations. In a recent study in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Crowley and Cominetti (2014) point out that the high levels of youth unemployment in places where previous generations relied on traditional industries, such as coal mining and textiles, have largely disappeared. They also point to factors that affect particular cities:

*Cities will experience distinctive challenges which may result in higher levels of youth unemployment. These may include too few apprenticeship places to meet demand; poor careers advice and guidance; a lack of targeted employment support for those not claiming benefits; a lack of suitable public transport infrastructure; and poor skills levels. (ibid., pp. 3–4)*

Here, we can observe arguments for a place-based approach reflecting the challenges experienced in one location but not another. Issues that pertain to young people are reported in many of the cities that have received a UNESCO Learning City Award. In Villa María in Argentina, for example, the city ‘pays particular attention to vulnerable young people, offering new opportunities’ (UIL, 2017c, p. 18), and Câmara de Lobos on the Portuguese island of Madeira, with its high proportion of young people, reports ‘initiatives ... to help young people from poor neighbourhoods integrate into society. Equipa de Rua (Street Team), for example, focuses on young people with drug addictions or family issues,

while Esc@Up supports them in their studies' (ibid., p. 139). In the UK city of Bristol, the mayor 'has made a commitment to provide work experience placements and apprenticeship opportunities for every young person in Bristol who wants one' (ibid., p. 169).

The primary aim of the city of Contagem, Brazil, is to foster community development and social cohesion by providing learning and training opportunities for its citizens. It is one of the most important industrial cities in Brazil and faces significant challenges in terms of providing suitable routes for its citizens to participate fully in the labour market. One of its main imperatives is tackling the challenges of vulnerable young people. To address poverty, unemployment and violence, the city has implemented a project wherein teachers are trained to be 'community speakers', i.e. local ambassadors to connect with vulnerable groups, mostly youths, strengthening social cohesion and building a bridge between communities and schools. These educators visit the families of young students in socially vulnerable situations to search for solutions to the major problems faced by young people in the community. These community speakers share their knowledge by visiting their students' families and community leaders, and by participating in social activities related to the school community. 'This cooperation enabled shared actions concerning health, education and the provision of safety equipment to improve the quality of life of children and adolescents' (ibid., p. 24).

In sub-Saharan Africa, Inoue et al. (2015, pp. 76–95) provide a comprehensive account of the various forms interventions to address the issue of out-of-school youth can take, classifying them as three 'entry points', they are (1) retention in school of at-risk youth; (2) remediation through formal or alternative education; and (3) integration into the labour market. Strategies to improve retention vary, and many focus on financial aid, including conditional and non-conditional cash transfers to households. The most extensive example is the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) child support grant, available to lower income households, which, according to Case, Hosegood and Lund (2005) has improved school enrolment significantly.

The sub-Saharan African region also offers alternative programmes to create second-chance opportunities to receive basic literacy skills, often through the non-formal sector. Examples include the USAID/Liberia Advancing Youth Project for alternative education and Ethiopia's Community Based Non-formal Livelihood Skills Training for Youths and Adults in Selected Regions of Ethiopia (EXPRO) programme. The latter combines basic literacy training with soft skills and entrepreneurial skills development.

There are also a multitude of workforce development programmes in the region, but, according to Inoue et al. (2015, p. 91), many of the national programmes are not successful – though they do cite the success of Uganda's Youth Opportunities Program. One of the major challenges in workforce development programmes is finding financing for self-employment and entrepreneurship. Often, the only option is informal economies. Although this is not an issue addressed extensively in accounts of African learning city development, it is a strand of activity in other parts of the world.

Indeed, the issue of young people and entrepreneurship in the context of learning city development was incorporated in the *Cork Call to Action for Learning Cities* (UIL, 2017a). Further, in a PASCAL briefing paper, Kearns (2018) provides a succinct account of not only entrepreneurship's link with business development, but also where it can contribute to building 'a mindful learning culture in communities'. Mugione and Penaluna (2017) offer six implications for developing youth entrepreneurship in learning cities, and Kearns himself, based on his observations in the city of Brimbank in Australia, has suggested how a strong youth centre can be a hub for such development. Furthermore, one of the main objectives of the megacity of São Paulo, Brazil, is to promote entrepreneurial skills among young people and vulnerable populations. Here, as in other cities, entrepreneurship is viewed widely as a solution for creating job opportunities for many target groups, including women (James, Preece and Valdés-Cotera, 2018).

### *The young or the old, or intergenerational approaches?*

Although we strive to combat the challenges faced by young people, we cannot forget about those at other stages of life. Countries with rapidly ageing populations must also focus on those in the third age. Issues of social isolation and the clear link between learning in later life and health and well-being are compelling arguments for making provision available to older people, and there are concomitant benefits for all, including potential savings in healthcare. Japan, with 28 per cent of the population now aged 65 or over<sup>24</sup>, has adopted lifelong learning practices to revitalize local communities facing the consequences of this demographic change.

Since as early as 2000, over half of the cities in Japan with a population exceeding 100,000 have a 'citizens' university', a term describing a range of institutions operated by the state, the non-formal sector or by citizens themselves (Tanaka, 2000). These universities offer what the Japanese describe as *shakai kyôiku* (social education), a term that was in use before 'lifelong education' became popular. The citizens' universities in Japan are place-based, making them particularly relevant for learning city development. We also observe similar initiatives for older people in other parts of the world. The Korean city of Suwon, faced with an ageing population, has developed 'two innovative participatory school projects, one focusing on senior citizens and their learning needs, and the other focusing on intergenerational and cross-topical education for all' (UIL, 2017c, p. 145). In this city, which also received a UNESCO Learning City Award, it has been reported that these initiatives have been successfully adopted by the citizens, who participate intensively in all activities designed for them. Participant numbers have more than doubled between 2011 and 2017, which has had a very positive impact on the city.

However, in many parts of the world, the question of whether to focus on the younger or older generation in the face of major economic constraints presents difficult policy choices. With

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<sup>24</sup> See <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.65UP.TO.ZS?end=2020&locations=JP&start=1960&view=chart> (Accessed 14 October 2021)

restrictions in public expenditure, the argument with greatest resonance suggests that early intervention has the greatest long-term economic and social benefit. Therefore, for the most part, it is the young who benefit the most, although even the investment in them is often inadequate. In cities such as Dar es Salaam, in the United Republic of Tanzania, for example, Moshi, Msuya and Todd (2018, p. 37) highlight in an SHLC paper the cooperation between the public and private sectors as well as with NGOs in skills development to maximize opportunities for the burgeoning youth population. 'Such opportunities were recognized as a means of alleviating poverty and making youths recognized by local government authorities' (ibid., p. 88). Unfortunately, however, there is a lack of learning opportunities for older adults for whom education is critically important in the face of poverty, deprivation and poor access to healthcare (Mwaikokesya and Mushi, 2017).

## Learning cities for the digitally excluded

Educational opportunity has changed with the advent of modern information and communications technologies (ICTs). As a result, there are many more ways for individuals to manage their own learning in a variety of contexts throughout their lifetimes (Sharples, 2000, p. 178; Rashid et al., 2013). The World Economic Forum (WEF, 2016, p. 11) summarizes that potential well:

Technology holds enormous promise to help foster twenty-first century skills, including social and emotional skills. It can personalize learning, engage the disengaged, complement what happens in the classroom, extend education outside the classroom and provide access to learning to students who otherwise might not have sufficient educational opportunities.

New forms of literacy, artificial intelligence, smart city development and the automatization of processes represent an enormous challenge for education policy-makers across the globe. The risks and difficulties affecting labour markets and social inclusion have created new imperatives. Lifelong learning is seen as a potential tool to tackle the inequalities that have emerged. Governments at

local, regional and national levels around the globe have been adjusting and renewing education systems to keep up with technological developments. Previous generations have also appealed for education to be armed to face economic exigencies and challenges provoked by technological development (Aoun, 2017, p. 6), but the current challenges and opportunities are greater than ever.

Amartya Sen (2001) argues that the capacity to be educated provides citizens with the possibility of freedom to achieve what they consider valuable. The development of ICT skills has become fundamental since it empowers all citizens, including those in the third age, and reduces their risks of exclusion from social, economic and cultural life. These skills can be acquired in the context of traditional learning initiatives, namely on-site activities, but also through targeted learning courses based on social networking (Trentin and Repetto, 2008, p. 189).

The opportunity for vulnerable groups to develop technological and communication skills represents the potential for a better life – but there is a downside. There are risks of new digital divides in terms of access to emerging technology and suitably literate training. Historically, this divide has been posited in terms of class

'The development of ICT skills has become fundamental since it empowers all citizens, including those in the third age, and reduces their risks of exclusion from social, economic and cultural life.'

and race, with a particular concern for those living in remote and rural locations. There are geographical dividing lines between ‘developed countries and developing countries’ and ‘urban areas and rural areas’ (Kos-Łabędowicz, 2017, p. 197). Furthermore, technologically driven smart city developments that neglect the social dimension and the involvement of citizens in planning processes are likely to exacerbate exclusion (Borkowska and Osborne, 2018). The work of Manchester and Cope (2019) in the UK city of Bristol also addresses issues of citizen participation and learning in the context of co-designing a smart city.

There are however examples of positive developments at regional and city levels. In Larissa, Greece, a UNESCO Learning City Award recipient, there has been promotion of ‘intergenerational exchange between young people and senior citizens, as well as specific courses designed to familiarize the latter with computers and modern technologies’ (UIL, 2017c, p. 76). At the regional level in Italy, the Institute for Educational Technology of the National Research Council (CNR–ITD) implemented the project *Informatica per la Terza Età* (ICT for the third age). Initiatives have been organized as part of an experimental five-year programme in the Liguria region aimed at introducing the basics of ICT to people aged 60+. The programme is aimed at developing two specific skills: (1) the optimum use of search engines for information and resource retrieval, and (2) the establishment and management of web services based on social networking (Trentin and Repetto, 2008, p. 190). Through this programme, participants acquire awareness and ‘achieve mastery thresholds that make them digitally literate, and hence more able to participate in and contribute to innovation processes taking place in present society’ (ibid., p. 198). In Finland, the city of Espoo, another emblematic UIL prize-winner, has launched strategies to foster the integration of older people into the world of technology and communications. The city believes that older people must develop essential skills for living in the digital world; it has therefore organized small-scale workshops in city libraries where young students teach older people how to use ICT tools (UIL and NILE, 2015, p. 61).

As urban centres become increasingly ‘smart’, citizens are empowered through active and democratic inclusion in all stages of development and implementation of technological change (Riva Sanseverino, Riva Sanseverino and Vaccaro, 2017; Dameri, 2017). The city of Amsterdam in the Netherlands provides one of the best examples of citizen engagement within smart city development.<sup>25</sup> The initiative brings together local communities, innovative companies, knowledge institutions and the public (the ‘quadruple helix’) on one platform to shape the development of the city collectively. It is open to anyone, underpinned by the fact that the city has opened its data to online access. The city also assesses issues raised by citizens through an incubator, StartupAmsterdam, and creates related challenges for start-up companies to solve using city data. The city is now considering moving from a smart city version 2.0, where development is led by the city rather than by technology providers, to smart city 3.0, a phase in which citizen co-creation is enabled by the city and technology (MacPherson, 2017).

Learning cities can also assist neighbouring rural populations. Access to high-speed broadband internet in rural European areas is considered a determinant area for action. Specifically, one of the action areas in the European Commission’s Digital Agenda for Europe is to ‘guarantee universal broadband coverage with increasing speeds’, and it argues that ‘wireless (terrestrial and satellite) broadband can play a key role to ensure coverage of all areas including remote and rural regions’ (EC, 2010, p. 19).

Many UNESCO Learning City Award recipients demonstrate the commitment of local authorities to providing digital literacy in rural and marginalized areas and acknowledge that citizens in rural areas are more vulnerable to becoming digitally excluded. In Beijing, China, for example, along with the creation of digital libraries and community education websites, ‘more than 300 distance learning facilities have been provided in more remote suburban districts. Full use is being made of the latest technology to launch distance education in rural areas. In addition, each

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<sup>25</sup> See <https://amsterdamsmartcity.com> [Accessed 19 July 2019].



government department in the region has created its own digital learning space' (UIL and NILE, 2015, p. 41). The Argentinian city of Villa María, meanwhile, has launched several initiatives and strategies to ensure universal access to a wide array of learning opportunities based on the use of technology libraries. The *bibliomóviles*, mobile libraries, provides services to the city's urban and rural districts and offers a range of technology-driven recreational activities (UIL, 2017c, p. 20). Giza, in Egypt, has made similar efforts to reach remote marginalized and rural sectors. In collaboration with local NGOs, authorities provide learning opportunities and skills to citizens, focusing mainly on literacy. Finally, the case of Hangzhou, China, stands out in the provision of learning opportunities in rural areas: the city has worked with galleries, museums and cultural centres to establish free access to physical and digital learning platforms. 'This thriving learning and cultural environment created by the city of Hangzhou has fostered the development of digital and creative industries, boosted the city's overall economy and contributed to the well-being of all of its citizens' (ibid., p. 44).

In Glasgow, UK, there is a clear relationship between the city's commitment to becoming a learning city and its digital strategy and policy on digital inclusion (Glasgow City Council, 2018, p. 30), which recognizes the multiplier effect of exclusion on access to other services. A number of interesting actions pertaining to inclusion are found in the digital strategy among a much wider and comprehensive set of actions. Examples include:

- '... the Digital Resilience Group is developing work to include care-experienced young people and linking it to work with looked-after older people...' (ibid., p. 31);
- '... development of training programmes to develop digital agility for community workers supporting adult literacy and numeracy services, English for Speakers of Other Languages programmes, adult learning and youth services' (ibid., p. 31)

Significantly, the work in digital inclusion is linked explicitly to the city's Community Learning and Development Plan, which is statutory, must include partnership and must be agreed upon with

government. The *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act of 2015* presents potential for further bottom-up development and has suggested that the opinions and needs of communities be expressed through local community councils (Scottish Parliament, 2015).

### *Learning cities, slums and deprived neighbourhoods*

All cities in relative terms have deprived neighbourhoods, though those with rapidly expanding populations and massive inward migration face the biggest challenges. What constitutes a deprived area will vary from country to country, and the sophistication of metrics used to determine whether a place is deprived also varies. Slums are a form of urban settlement where deprivation is extreme. UN Habitat defines slums as informal and often illegal housing, within which there are unhealthy, overcrowded, unstable and often unsafe homes with limited access to basic services such as water, electricity and gas, and with no rights of permanent residence.<sup>26</sup> These infrastructure and health issues combined with lack of security and the threat of violence lead to unimaginable challenges, and one clear consequence thereof is a lack of educational opportunity. The examples of initiatives in Brazil and Egypt described below do, however, provide some directions for cities to take. We might think that slums are the preserve of the Global South, but there are arguments that slums are returning in some developed countries following the global economic crisis and the introduction of austerity measures.

In relation to measurement, there are countries with a long history of collecting area-based data concerning deprivation. For example, in England, UK, local measures of deprivation have been collected since the 1970s and, after many decades of development, the recent *English Indices of Deprivation 2015* contains 37 separate indicators, organized within seven domains of deprivation (income deprivation, employment deprivation, health deprivation and disability, education skills and training deprivation, barriers to housing and services, living environment deprivation, and crime). These are combined, using appropriate weightings, to calculate the *Index of*

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<sup>26</sup> See <https://www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk/what-we-do/slum-rehabilitation/what-is-a-slum/> [Accessed 18 August 2021].

*Multiple Deprivation 2015* (IMD 2015), which allow the country to be divided into small data zones (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015). Similar indices exist elsewhere in the UK, and are determinants for educational initiatives, notably those related to the widening of access to higher education. The city of Glasgow's initiatives in digital inclusion are one illustration of how such indices are used.

Other countries have created similar fine-grained data zones using their own metrics. One example is the South African Index of Multiple Deprivation, based on the country's most recent census of 2011 (Noble et al., 2013). However, in South Africa, the legacy of apartheid remains, and despite the availability of data and efforts over two decades, the inequalities of a segregated system in which racial groups received drastically different education opportunities are still present. As evident in an SHLC paper, the country still exhibits a poorly distributed and low-quality human capital (Abrahams et al., 2018, p. 25). As a consequence, in the city of Johannesburg, the conception of the 'learning city model' is developing at the provincial level to accomplish a very wide range of objectives that cross compulsory education. These include the improvement of the quality of primary education, addressing the challenges of teaching and outputs from the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector, preparing secondary pupils in mathematics and science education, and ensuring effective implementation of skills development programmes for unemployed youth (ibid., p. 36).

Irrespective of the availability of comprehensive data, approaches based on principles underpinning lifelong learning have been adopted in many cities to facilitate access to better opportunities for development and social inclusion for the most deprived. For example, the Brazilian city of Sorocaba's learning city goals include (1) increasing the number of available pre-school places, (2) reducing violence and social disadvantage, and (3) reducing unemployment and enhancing the skills and qualifications of employees. Each of these goals targets vulnerable groups, particularly young adults. One of the programmes, *Território Jovem* (Young Territory),

offers a variety of courses and leisure and cultural opportunities to people aged between 12 and 29 years (UIL and NILE, 2015, p. 26). In a similar way in Brazil, the city of Contagem in the state of Minas Gerais faces severe challenges in social exclusion, urban migration, racism, juvenile violence and drug abuse. In 2017, the city established the Community Speaker Project, which encourages teachers to take strategic roles in community development: 'After completing specific training, teachers become *articuladores comunitários* (community speakers), serving as ambassadors in their communities' (UIL, 2017c, p. 24).

As part of the greater Cairo, the city of Giza, with its population nearing 7 million is key to Egypt's development (City of Giza, 2019). The city authorities aim to reduce school dropouts to a minimum level and ensure that all citizens, regardless of their economic background, can read and write, with a special focus on the engagement of women. The local government provides community classes in remote and deprived villages to increase access to lifelong learning opportunities. Women in particular are targeted with lifelong learning opportunities to increase their empowerment and development in both rural and urban areas. The problem of poor and marginalized neighbourhoods is important in Egypt and authorities have designed strategies to tackle it. The Learning City Award winner has dedicated significant efforts to providing lifelong learning opportunities in deprived areas, collaborating with local NGOs, not-for-profit organizations and religious groups, and mostly providing basic skills such as literacy and numeracy. 'Non-formal courses and workshops specifically for women are designed to raise their awareness of health issues and transform them into community health advocates. Giza has, moreover, been providing women with health-related skills courses and workshops' (UIL, 2017c, p. 56).

## Learning cities and disability

For those affected by any kind of disability, there is much evidence that a lack of accessibility to basic services such as health, education, transportation, sanitation and water leads to disproportion-

ate disadvantage and marginalization. People with disabilities are poorer, more deprived and excluded compared to those without a disability, and 'these disadvantages also impede the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other internationally agreed development goals' (UN, 2016, p. 7).

However, disability is a normative concept that was explored thoroughly in a recent overview by Vehmas and Watson (2016). They argue that, in the traditional medical model, disability is viewed as 'the result from impaired functioning or being and is ameliorated through the promotion of interventions that remove or reduce the impairment' and continue by contrasting social and postconventional models of disability with the medical model, which 'do not equate impairment with disablement' (ibid., p. 2). The social model argues for the 'social and material causes of disability', while post-conventional models 'explore the origins of ableist, discriminatory and oppressive ideas and values' (ibid.). These are important distinctions that serve as a helpful background when examining cities' efforts to include people with disabilities in learning. We cannot ignore the social and cultural factors that determine the definition of disability while recognizing the impact of medical conditions at the same time. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) (WHO, 2001) defines disability as difficulties in functioning that pertain to one or more of three interconnected areas: impairments, activity limitations, and participation limitations.

Typically, however, the disabled are the 'others' who have been viewed as having deficiencies and deficits. Urban research tells of how cities are 'disabling' and how urban policies limit the possibilities of disabled people to engage fully, including in learning (Prince, 2008). City design has not given much thought to a range of physically disabilities or to those experiencing a variety of cognitive impairments. Much of the debate as to whether a city is disability-friendly tends to focus on mobility and physical infrastructure. Of course, these are important as mediators of access to services, including education.

The role of education is vital, and the SDGs would not be met without improved access to and outcomes from educational inclusion for all, including the disabled. A UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) flagship report (UN DESA, 2019) contains evidence of disability and development, but it points out that, within SDG 4, 'only two targets explicitly mention disability, namely target 4.5, which aims inter alia at ensuring equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities; and target 4.a that calls for building and upgrading education facilities that are disability sensitive and providing inclusive learning environments for all' (ibid., p. 73).

We do know from many studies that disabled persons are more likely to have 'worse educational and labour market outcomes and are more likely to be poor than persons without disabilities' (WHO and The World Bank Group, 2011, p. 39); this applies globally. Furthermore, more disabled children do not attend school compared to their non-disabled peers (UN DESA, 2019, p. 76) and adults with disabilities have lower literacy levels (WHO/World Bank, 2011, p. 83). Gender is an additional factor to consider, as evident in a recent report:

Girls with disabilities are among the world's most marginalized groups of society, resulting from social norms and cultural bias around both gender and disability. Yet their needs, and the double discrimination they face, have largely been neglected and overlooked in education dialogue and practice. This greatly limits their educational opportunities (UNGEI/Leonard Cheshire Disability, 2017, p. 7).

For interventions concerning children rather than youths and adults, countries focus broadly on one of two strategies: the first is providing additional support where children are taught alongside their peers, and the second is the provision of 'special schools' catering for particular needs. Most countries adopt the first of these approaches to provide an inclusive offer as promoted by the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2007, though there are challenges in doing so in systems that are highly segregated (Powell, 2011).

In the case of learning cities, mention of disability is unfortunately rare; however, some noteworthy exceptions are worth highlighting. For example, the city of Larissa in Greece, which received a UNESCO Learning City Award in 2017, reports that it ran summer camps accessible to children with disabilities in 2015. In 2016, 'a disability awareness week, highlighting related learning activities, was held in collaboration with the Greek National Confederation of Disabled People (ESAEA), local disability associations, parent associations and schools' (UIL, 2017c, pp. 80–81). Contagem, Brazil, meanwhile, offers courses to citizens related to disability as part of promoting social inclusion (*ibid.*, p. 5). While these and many other cities do much to include the disabled, the topic is lacking from most descriptions of learning city developments, whether in the UNESCO network or elsewhere. Duhok, Iraq, one of the partner cities in the SUEUAA project, has identified this issue and is acting.

Disability and armed conflict are closely connected. People are disabled physically and mentally by war, and the disabled are more severely affected than others, not only by conflict itself but also by access to humanitarian relief (Portero and Enríquez, 2018). In Duhok, with some 800,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), mainly from Mosul in northern Iraq but also from the Syrian Arab Republic, a range of training programmes have been put into place for the psychological rehabilitation of adults, another reminder of how different forms of disadvantage are connected. Academic staff in the Department of Psychology at the University of Duhok, in coordination with German universities (the Institute for Trans-cultural Health Science at the Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg and the University of Tübingen) travel to Germany in a continuous cycle of two staff members every three months. They then return to the refugee camps and conduct rehabilitation programmes. German academics, in turn, visit the University of Duhok and stay for a period of two to four weeks. In partnership with German humanitarian agencies, a group of University of Duhok undergraduate psychology students go to the IDPs and refugee camps in Duhok once a week to conduct rehabilitation and psychology programmes. The significance of the activities has

led to the establishment of the Institute for Psychotherapy and Psychotherapy at University of Duhok, along with a new master's programme.

Meanwhile, in Bangladesh, a non-formal programme, A Second Chance for Education, has been implemented in the cities of Dhaka, Chittagong and Rajshahi. It focuses on children (with or without disabilities) working in the informal sector who are looking for a second chance to complete their primary education, and offers a condensed and flexible primary education programme for the purpose. After completion, participants can choose either to learn vocational skills at the programme's centres in six-month part-time courses or to apply for one or two years of technical training. The non-formal education programme also has job placement officers who help students find employment after graduating (WHO, 2010, p. 60).

## Data collection approaches and data sharing with citizens

The quality of national data in the field of education and the measure of equity varies globally. The OECD's annual *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators* is the most comprehensive of national-level comparisons for OECD and associated countries. The publication comprises measures on social outcomes of education, enrolment rates, adult participation in education and learning (formal and non-formal sectors), and decision-making distribution and accountability by level of government, among other indicators. Further, OECD collaborates with the 'UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the SDG 4 Steering Committee and the technical working groups that have been put in place to help build a comprehensive data system for global reporting, agree on the data sources and formulae used for reporting on the SDG 4 global indicators and on selected thematic indicators for OECD member countries and partner countries' (OECD, 2018, p. 15).

The 2018 edition of the OECD publication uses education data from the 35 OECD countries, two countries that participate in the OECD Indicators of Education Systems (INES) programme



(Brazil and the Russian Federation), and other partner G20 and OECD accession countries that are not INES members (Argentina, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, India, Indonesia, Lithuania, Saudi Arabia and South Africa) (OECD, 2018, p. 17). In some particular cases, the OECD uses information from OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) (see OECD, 2013), which assesses skills in the three cognitive domains of literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments. So, for some countries, there is reliable and good quality data, although not always comprehensive in all domains.

Among the most interesting findings in the 2018 report are those on measuring equity in education systems. Within these findings, three challenges stand out. Firstly, that the notion of equity is linked to a normative framework of fairness that may differ across countries and cultures. Secondly, there is a general lack of data available because equity indicators often require more refined data that allow for disaggregation among different groups in the population. To add complexity, in the case of the SDG framework, this disaggregation must also follow internationally agreed definitions that do not always match the national definitions. Thirdly, there are several different methods for measuring equity, all of which have advantages and disadvantages, and that could lead to different conclusions about the degree of inequity in a given country (UIS, 2018).

The countries dealt with in the OECD's work are a subset, mainly from the Global North, and even though the data in most cases is generally comprehensive, it still has limitations. In addition to the issue of equity, in PIAAC for example, data are not collected for adults beyond the age of 65. Looking beyond these countries, the quality of data in the field of lifelong learning as a whole is patchy, as is evident in UNESCO's *GRALE 3* report (UIL, 2016), wherein the statistics offered on participation, particularly in the Global South, are less than comprehensive. This is in part due to inconsistent definitions of what constitutes participation, and in part due to the lack of methodologies or resources to produce robust and meaningful data. However, for the metrics used in the Global

North, sample sizes have been too small to generate meaningful sub-group comparisons. For example, the proxy of participation from the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), which was used from 1994 to 1998 in OECD countries (OECD, 1997), is as follows:

During the past 12 months, that is since ..., did you receive any training or education including courses, private lessons, correspondence courses, workshops, on-the-job training, apprenticeship training, arts, crafts, recreation courses or any other training or education? (O'Connell, 1999, p. 6)

As it stands, this question, although offered to a statistically representative sample, is arguably of limited value given its breadth of possibility. However, when refined with follow-up questions to capture nuance, then cells become too small to infer confident population parameters (OECD, 2001, p. 185). Nonetheless, this and other related surveys, particularly in the Global North, provide some pointers towards barriers to participation, links to demographic factors, and levels of literacy. That being said, there are still challenges in capturing the extent and nature of non-formal and informal learning, areas which are still subject to discussion and which are very important to wider notions of engagement in learning cities (National Research Council, 2012).

However, little attention has been given to fine-grained analysis at urban level in such surveys, and in this section of the chapter, we focus on those approaches which might create more nuanced data, not simply on participation but also its outcomes. We provide an overview of tools that have been specifically developed to go beyond simple analysis of participation rates, and we look at how indicators may be developed to assess the contribution of different stakeholders to learning city development and how Key Features of Learning Cities (UIL, 2013) may be operationalized in practice. This will draw in part on work undertaken over the last 15 years by the PASCAL Observatory in a variety of projects and, more recently, at the University of Glasgow's Urban Big Data Centre<sup>27</sup> (see Jordan,

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.ubdc.ac.uk> [Accessed 16 August 2021].

Longworth and Osborne, 2014; Lido et al., 2016; Lido, Reid and Osborne, 2019). We also assess and classify what data collection processes have been put into place by established learning cities and consider what new and novel approaches might be used in the future (for example, social media and GPS data). Further, we assess not only the challenges of establishing processes to collect robust data, but also how that data can be used to further effective urban policies that will enhance inclusion.

In a recent PASCAL Briefing Paper, Tibbitt (2018), reports that there are numerous tools available across the world that seek to compare the relative performance of cities across a range of domains, and that they are often inconsistent. He usefully categorizes the main types of measurement tools that are available and argues that they can be used at various stages in the policy process. He proposes four categories:

1. Indexes and rankings based on secondary analysis of existing data – typically used to provide some idea of current performance and comparison with other cities;
2. New data collection and surveys – typically used to explore present performance or establish new knowledge and attributes of cities and populations;
3. Evaluation approaches – typically used to ascertain the efficiency and/or effectiveness of present or new initiatives;
4. Qualitative instruments for benchmarking and auditing – typically used to assess strengths and weaknesses in present performance or processes (ibid., p. 2).

Approaches that collect primary data while still using traditional methods such as surveys may now be superseded by more novel ones, using techniques that have only become available since the advent of powerful computing processing technologies. These approaches are inextricably linked to the advent of big data techniques and, in particular, the explosion of data available in our social and economic transactions, as well as in other aspects of our day-to-day living, captured in digital form (GPS data, CCTV, social media, etc.).

The Canadian Composite Learning Index (CLI) (Cappon and Laughlin, 2013) is among the approaches that analyse existing datasets, later adopted in Europe by the European Lifelong Learning Indicators Index (ELLI-Index), which was developed by the Bertelsmann Foundation in Germany (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2010). The CLI and ELLI-Index were both loosely based on UNESCO's four pillars of learning as laid out by Delors et al. (1996); they are (1) learning to know, (2) learning to do, (3) learning to live together and (4) learning to be.

From the four pillars, the CLI created 17 indicators and 26 specific measures, and eventually a composite index connected to an index of social and economic well-being. The particular benefit of CLI in the context of learning city development is that it can analyse data at community level; in the Canadian context, it can assess lifelong learning in 4,500 communities, longitudinally, with repeated measures to determine the extent of change. The CLI informed the development of learning city initiatives such as the Community Foundational-Learning Plan of Edmonton in the Canadian state of Alberta (City of Edmonton, 2013).

Similarly, the ELLI-Index makes comparisons of countries and regions in Europe and has been assessed systematically by Saisana (2010, p. 43) as having 'the quality features to be used as material for the analysis of lifelong learning in the European Union countries.' Across seven European nations, the MASON (Mainstream socio-cultural dynamics to enhance national lifelong learning strategies) project, funded by the European Commission, developed indicators to identify variations in performance in lifelong learning at the regional level throughout the EU. These indicators were both 'individual', as they related to levels of education and participation in the information society, and 'structural', referring to socio-economic factors and aspects of science and technology; both are available at NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) Level 3<sup>28</sup> (see Tibbitt and Wheeler, 2015). An important issue in the use of metrics is their transferability from one nation to another.

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28 A hierarchical system for dividing up the economic territory of the EU and the UK. See <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/background> [Accessed 17 August 2021].

Based on the CLI and the ELLI-Index, the Ukrainian Government developed a set of indicators to measure and monitor performance related to the implementation of lifelong learning policies in the country. In doing so, it identified that some of the criterion and principles for measuring lifelong learning proposed in those indexes presented problems, with some indicators unusable in the Ukraine (Pryima et al., 2018, p. 3).

Many relevant surveys have been developed on an international basis, and these tend to focus on participation rates, skills and forms of literacy. The most well-known of these surveys are the PIAAC (the OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies), the IALS (International Adult Literacy Survey) and the ALL (Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey). The latter survey, the ALL, was used from 2003–2007, after IALS and prior to PIAAC (OECD, 2013). These well-validated instruments for mapping participation rates and current skills levels in all forms of adult learning are relevant resources, and they can monitor these rates over time. One clear message from PIAAC has been that learning begets learning: those who have participated and gained the highest qualification levels are much more likely to participate again. There are echoes here of the classic work of the US scholar K. Patricia Cross (1981) and her seminal chain-of-response (COR) model.

Surveys such as PIAAC are comprehensive and provide national-level data on certain dimensions of learning cities. There are many other measures that could be used both at an individual level and institutionally, and other forms of surveys that are used in many learning cities. For example, in Beijing, China, specialized research centres, institutions and strategies have been developed to monitor progress systematically. The Beijing Municipal Education Commission has established a group of experts to develop the Beijing Evaluation Index to monitor the city's performance, drawing its inspiration from UIL's (2013) Key Features of Learning Cities, but making modifications to suit the city's specific circum-

stances (UIL, 2013, p 45).<sup>29</sup> This tool covers factors such as policy, legislation, media coverage, organization, management, funding, human resources, research, innovation and implementation across all levels, from preschool to education for older people, immigrants and disadvantaged groups.

Meanwhile, the Beijing Municipal Leadership Group for Constructing the Learning City has formulated a number of mechanisms to evaluate the performance of the learning system (including enterprises, villages and government agencies) at the district and sub-district levels. To monitor development, the city has established both qualitative and quantitative indicators: the latter is discussed by members of a research team and associates experienced in building learning city evaluation indicators, whereas the quantitative indicators are selected based on information disclosed by the National Bureau of Statistics (Wu et al., 2015, p. 12).

The indicators are set at three different stages: primary, intermediate and advanced. At the intermediate stage, there are 70 indicators, including publicity on learning city development, leading organizations involved, standard per capita funding for the learning city, lifelong learning participation, number of education and training organizations, number of students in universities and colleges, number of artistic performance venues and museums, percentage of learning offices in districts and subdistricts, and number of learning government agencies, NGOs and enterprises established, among others. For the 70 indicators used in the monitoring process at the intermediate stage, '35 indicators need to be evaluated on site and 35 indicators can be evaluated according to publicly statistical data' (ibid., p. 18).

Some cities use pre-existing instruments; for example, Surabaya in Indonesia 'monitors its progress in becoming a learning city with

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29 See also a report on creating a more operable learning city index for China at <http://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities/more-operable-learning-city-index-china> [Accessed 16 August 2021]. Besides Beijing, other major Chinese cities, including Shanghai, have been involved in discussions.

both the Human Development Index (HDI)<sup>30</sup> and the Local Culture Index, the latter of which describes both how many cultures are preserved and how many people have literacy skills' (UIL, 2017c, p. 110). In Europe, there is a long history of using qualitative indicators of learning region/city development. Much of this is inspired by the work of British educator Norman Longworth, which raised awareness that there is much more to measure that relates to learning than participation rates and traditional outcomes of the formal system. With the now-defunct European Lifelong Learning Initiative, Prof. Longworth developed the TELS (Towards a European Learning Society) project, which was among the first to identify indicators for municipalities to measure their performance and progress using a 'learning cities audit tool' to assess the effectiveness of particular stakeholders (Longworth and Osborne, 2010). This tool has since been used in France, Norway, Ireland, Italy and the UK.

There are additional tools to measure the impact of learning city initiatives, the most noteworthy of which is the Collective Impact Assessment Tool, used in monitoring and evaluation by the city of Melton, Australia. This tool focuses on the strength of partnerships, and the level to which measurable goals have been achieved (Wheeler and Wong, 2015). Another tool, the My City of Migration Diagnostic (MyCOM), used by the Cities of Migration network, allows cities to assess the quality of inclusion in their communities (Cities of Migration, 2021).

There is a basis for assessing various measures of progress against the template of the UNESCO GNLC's Key Features of Learning Cities, and, in some cases, measurement instruments are being utilized. However, the process is far from systematic, and while it might be possible to agree on measures for social inclusion (based on demographics suitably benchmarked to local conditions), it is difficult to determine what a socially inclusive learning city (based on the elements of the GNLC's fundamental conditions) might look like. The Urban Big Data Centre at the University of Glasgow

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30 The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development. See <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi> [Accessed 16 August 2021].

has attempted to identify what a 'socially inclusive learning city' is by operationalizing the Key Features systematically. Questionnaire items drawn from an array of pre-existing, well-validated tools has facilitated systematic operationalization of the Key Features that are obtainable through survey methods (see Lido et al., 2016; Lido, Reid and Osborne, 2019).

The city of Glasgow (which recently joined the UNESCO GNLC) implemented the survey part of this work, including not only demographic measures such as self-reporting of qualifications and participation in learning, but also measures of various literacies and behaviours. This is complemented in the survey by questions about mobility within the city and other data collection methods: a travel diary, mapping of movements using GPS trackers, wearable automated life-logging devices to capture images and social media (Twitter data). Arguably, this multi-mode approach to data collection is a more complete mechanism to study a learning city (see Thakuriah et al., 2020). Further, these innovative and practical methods can be used not only at city level, but also neighbourhood level, and they avoid the expense of traditional survey methods, which may not be feasible in many parts of the world.

Applications embedded within mobile phones, if used creatively and ethically, could collect data much more efficiently and comprehensively than surveys, and offer proxy measures for the metrics sought by traditional methods. The arguments for the use of alternative methods are well rehearsed in a publication by the National Research Council in the United States of America (2014, p. 107). The emergence of the big data that can be captured from a variety of (largely though not exclusively) digital information and communication technologies, coupled with advances in computational science analytic techniques, raises the possibility of developing less obtrusive indicators of citizens' civic engagement and social cohesion behaviours, and perhaps even their opinions.

To collect data is important, but arguably that data will have its greatest impact if shared and used by beneficiaries, and there are good examples of engaging citizens actively in learning city



developments by sharing data. Among other cities, Villa María in Argentina has made its municipal data freely accessible through a dedicated online platform. This allows citizens to follow the city's progress, while encouraging them to think creatively and develop tools for in-depth analysis of their living environment (UIL, 2017c, p. 15). Many similar examples exist. In Glasgow, Reid (2017) reports the use of 3D models as a form of engagement concerning life-wide literacy; in Chicago, Laitinen, Osborne and Stenvall (2016) report how the city organizes an Open Gov Hack Night, which, among other things, teaches citizens about open data, smart cities and open government. The example of the city of Amsterdam presented in a preceding section of this chapter offers a further model of this type of activity.

There are many other alternative methods that might have greater pertinence and that would align more strongly with the SDGs. One of these is the variety of 'subjective well-being' measures within the World Happiness Reports<sup>31</sup> of the UN's Sustainable Development Solution's Network (SDSN, 2021), and, of course, the SDG Indices and Dashboard (Sachs et al., 2019) is an important backdrop to all developments.

## Conclusion (key trends and issues)

We can find many illustrations of city initiatives around the world that seek to improve the inclusion of disadvantaged groups. Broadly, this can be distinguished by their focus in terms of target groups and thematic areas of particular concern. They can also be categorized by the extent to which they are top-down and supply driven, bottom-up and responsive to demand, or directly led by citizens. While there are many top-down initiatives, our overview suggests that bottom-up approaches are rare, although there are promising models in embryo. For example, Lang, Pearce and Symons (2018) explore what a community-led learning city might look like with a project funded through the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Connected Communities Catalyst

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<sup>31</sup> See <https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2019/> [Accessed 16 August 2021].

Fund with a focus on Salford Council's learning city and Bradford's 'community university'. In reality, there is a continuum between top-down and bottom-up approaches and it would be wrong to suggest that one end of the continuum is necessarily more effective than the other. Turok (2019), drawing on the work of SHLC, reminds us, in the context of urban development in Rwanda, that these processes are not incompatible, but that there needs to be consistency between them, citing the *Umuganda* civic programmes as an example. We have previously provided an example of citizen-led learning city activity both in relation to indigenous peoples and youth in the city of Victoria in Canada.

Although the 'learning city' is the vehicle of such work currently, we can find examples of comprehensive formal provision that crosses the life-course and addresses the needs of all communities in modern cities in the recent past. Bynner (2017) cites the example of one of the world's mega-cities, London, in that context, and argues that it is the epitome of a learning city.

Its Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), which ran from 1965 to 1990, offered a network of provision throughout the 1970s and 1980s, entitled 'An Education Service for the Whole Community', via five tertiary education colleges and adult education institutes for different learning purposes. By the time it ceased operations in 1990, the ILEA (which referred to adult education as the 'jewel in the crown') had provided 20,000 classes with 240,000 enrolments – 14 per cent of the non-vocational adult education in England and Wales – for 5 per cent of the population (Jupp, 2010; Bynner, 2017, p. 66).

This comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach in education, which was also evident in other major UK, disappeared because of local government reforms and realignment of funding priorities for education. The UK's leading role as one of the early adopters of the learning city model in the 1990s, inspired by central government funding, also disappeared after burning brightly for a short period (see DfEE, 1998; Jordan, Longworth and Osborne, 2014). The learning city has re-emerged in certain places, such as Swansea, Bristol

and Glasgow, however, and is led once more by the cities themselves and are not dependent on central government inspirations and funding. At the same time, they are linked to an international movement, that of the UNESCO GNLC.

There are many initiatives that are piecemeal and, while they may be labelled as being exemplary of a learning city/region, are in reality simply an isolated initiative that is not locked into a holistic framework. In our analysis we provide a number of cases that are all-encompassing: they seek to involve all potential stakeholders in line with European Commission recommendations from 2001, and therefore situate learning city developments in a framework that encompasses much more than the formal education sector. We also emphasize the importance of a holistic approach with regard to thematic foci that might be addressed by learning cities: the environment, the economy, culture, health and well-being, the nature of infrastructure including transport, and the diversity of communities in cities.

We have provided a conceptual framework within which learning city developments can be understood and have shone light on the responses of cities to particular excluded groups. We point out that, while it may be convenient to silo individuals into categories for analysis, the reality of individuals' situations is often that they can experience social inclusion in more than one way. As a response, many initiatives are complex. As the intersectionality literature reminds us (see Tefera, Powers and Fischman, 2018), many individuals suffer from multiple disadvantages; initiatives must therefore address the needs of different groups and focus on different thematic areas.

We should note that transience of some learning city activities can be associated with prosaic factors. For example, there have been many other programmes that, as in the UK, have been dependent on subsidy, such as the German Learning Regions Network (Eckert et al. 2012, p. 14), which will diminish once funding is withdrawn. We are also reminded by a recent editorial in a special issue of the *Oxford Review of Education* that

the Learning City, like the Smart City, is neither an unalloyed good nor an unalloyed evil; it is a set of ideas, discourses, and practices that deserve scrutiny and attention by researchers working in the field of education alongside those researchers already exploring these issues in the fields of cultural geography, urban studies, and anthropology (Facer and Buchczyk, 2019, p. 155).

These authors caution us to reflect on calls to establish governance and partnership models that privilege certain actors, because in doing so, we may exclude citizens' needs, interests and concerns, and move away from the 'actually existing' Learning City' (Facer and Buchczyk, p. 155). Finally, we might reflect on the thoughts of Klaus Schwab (Chair of the World Economic Forum) and Davis (2018, p. 49), who refer to the very challenging overall context in which we live. He refers to 'simultaneous transformative trends: urbanisation, globalisation, demographic shifts, climate change and increasingly disruptive emerging technologies'.

## Recommendations

We have provided a broad overview of social inclusion in the context of learning city development, and end with a set of key recommendations.

The Key Features of Learning Cities provides a good framework for development, and the fundamental features of this UIL model, namely strong political will and commitment, governance and participation of all stakeholders, and mobilization and utilization of resources, remain important. The main challenge is to develop models that reflect citizen demand, and to create mechanisms that capture these demands. Thereby, citizens could be empowered to engage in local civic initiatives as agents of change and co-constructors of knowledge.

It perhaps should be recognized that the 'learning city' is a rhetorical conception that serves a social and economic purpose. Its reality is experienced by citizens, although not necessarily expressed in the terms of its advocates, and therefore there are multiple

realities. One person's experience of learning will not have the same spatial or virtual dimensions as another, and is not bounded by geographical, political or administrative parameters. Developments to enhance the inclusion of citizens therefore must cross such boundaries and reflect the reality of their day-to-day lives. Socially excluded groups are not homogeneous, and many individuals are excluded in multiple ways. It is too easy, for example, to consider all ethnic minorities as one group, and similarly this applies to migrants, refugees, disabled people as well as others that are labelled as belonging to a particular group. And many individuals experience disadvantage by virtue of more than one form of individual and situational disadvantage. Interventions that are piecemeal, focusing on specific issues only, may have limited effect, and we recommend that all cities consider inclusion in a holistic way, focusing on all aspects of city life that may impede access to educational opportunity, including transport and physical infrastructure.

It is evident that among the focus groups, disabled populations tend to be overlooked in learning city developments the most. We recommend special attention be given to this group and its heterogeneity.

We recognize that initiatives may be place- or context-specific and may depend on local cultures and traditions, and that 'policy borrowing' (Phillips and Ochs, 2003) from one place to another may be inappropriate. That being said, much can be learned by one city from another when the practice is used with due critical reflection. We must also recognize that much can be learned by the Global North from the Global South, and exchanges should be mutual. There is no one single starting point in developing a learning city, but there are existing models with strong steerage at national level, and others that have developed from the grassroots. In some cases, allocating responsibility for the coordination of development to a specific organization, such as a city library, has positive effects. We recommend creating active permanent exchange networks focusing on the different aspects of social inclusion in cities.

The quality of data to inform the work of learning cities is currently limited, although there are some exceptions. Potential tools exist, but the feasibility of using them, particularly for large-scale representative household surveys, is constrained by cost. Cities should consider using digital information and communication technologies, which are effective when coupled with the powerful analytics of modern computing. Of course, potential abuse of these methods requires strong policing.

Data collection should be complemented by data sharing and data co-creation. Open data platforms that allow sharing of data on cities and citizens is key. It allows individuals and citizen groups to offer solutions to issues that they themselves have identified as well as those identified by city authorities.

The major context for the work of learning cities is to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. The ultimate goal is the preservation of the planet, and we urge all cities to focus their educational practices around this imperative.

'The ultimate goal is the preservation of the planet, and we urge all cities to focus their educational practices around this imperative.'

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# Chapter 2

## Digital and data literacies for inclusion of marginalized citizens in learning cities

### Introduction

This chapter, originally a background paper for the fourth International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC 4), focuses on the themes of digital literacies and digital inclusion. These topics play an increasingly pivotal role in the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities' (GNLC) agenda and the realization of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly of SDG 4 on education. Moving the digital literacy discussion beyond the focus on information and communications technology (ICT) skills and competencies, we propose a more critical conception of digital inclusion that emphasizes data empowerment and new 'learning to learn' technologies as an emerging core focus of learning cities.

We will begin with a brief overview of digitally empowered learning cities in relation to 'smart' and 'future' cities, embedding them in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and moving towards the 2030 vision of inclusive (online and offline) education for all. We provide an interdisciplinary review of literature in the area of digital literacies, including a critical discussion on the

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overlap with information and data literacies, among others. The academic literature will be complemented by a look at the private- and third-sector approaches to data empowerment and digital literacy that can be found in cities, citing academic, governmental and applied real-world examples. We accomplish this by presenting case studies from different geographical areas, using our framework to identify four types of vulnerabilities as critical points in need of intervention: (1) vulnerabilities of access and poor technical infrastructures; (2) vulnerabilities of digitally marginalized groups and communities; (3) vulnerabilities related to digital knowledge, literacies and practice; and (4) vulnerabilities related to political will, policy development and economic priorities.

To address these issues, we propose:

- principle-based guidelines to embed digital and data literacies in common city-level practices and projects for future development;
- common themes for interventions;
- strategies and new policy directions for digital empowerment within learning cities/regions, such as digitally data-driven governance;
- creation of digitally open data infrastructure;
- national strategies for digital upskilling.

Given the push for open data science, we suggest expanding our understanding and practice of informal learning processes alongside a ‘lifelong digital inclusion for all’ agenda, and we offer the European Commission’s Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor as a comparative exemplar. We conclude by advocating for the development of an online interactive interface, moving beyond simple scoreboards and quantitative indices to a flexible platform on which digitally empowered cities could engage in a participatory co-created ethos to evidence examples of good practice for embedding digital empowerment at the heart of learning cities. To develop context-relevant and digitally savvy solutions for active citizenship and responsible lifelong participation in local and global communities, we must build a robust set of case study interventions, along with an emerging interdisciplinary, mixed-methodological evidence base of effective urban digital strategies and practices.

## Learning city (LC) and smart city frameworks

According to Townsend's *Smart Cities: Big Data, Civic Hackers, and the Quest for a New Utopia* (2013), 'smart cities' are cities in which information technology is intertwined with infrastructure (such as architecture, objects or even our bodies) to address social, economic and environmental issues. He argues critically against top-down corporate-driven agendas in favour of 'local ingenuity' to provide private and/or governmental solutions. This suggests a more network-based structure as opposed to a hierarchical one for capacity-building.

'Future cities' are similar concept, but there is a move away from more technical, urban approaches to include utopian ideals of harnessing the power of ubiquitous technology and integrated novel data streams, or 'big data' (Osborne and Lido, 2015). These would include socio-technological changes – ranging from wearable tracking devices to smart urban infrastructures – to address urban challenges (Klauser and Albrechtslund, 2014), as well as poverty, prejudice and social exclusion.

The learning cities framework also aims to address social challenges with a focus on economic and cultural prosperity, but this concept emerged from the work of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the 1970s on 'educating cities' (Osborne, Houston and Lido, 2018) and, again, in the 1990s, when the OECD contributed to the creation of the International Association of Educating Cities (IAEC). However, with the increasing literature and number of initiatives around the emergence, development and sustainability of smart and future cities, the notion of learning cities has now taken centre stage around the globe. This focus was driven by the recognition of the integrated nature of learning processes, lifelong learning and citizen participation, as well as a ground approach to implementing smart/digital technologies at city level. Our future cities cannot put forward innovative and digitally savvy solutions without the engagement of human capital resources alongside new approaches to learning.

'Our future cities cannot put forward innovative and digitally savvy solutions without the engagement of human capital resources alongside new approaches to learning.'



The current global context of the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution of fast-paced technological change has put pressure on traditional educational approaches and institutions, calling for us to revisit the learning cities agenda in a digital light. It demands a revision of modes of provision in particular, as well as digital learning engagement and literacy. Klaus Schwab, the founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum, describes the opportunities and challenges of ‘billions of people connected by mobile devices, with unprecedented processing power, storage capacity, and access to knowledge’ as unlimited, highlighting domains such as ‘artificial intelligence, robotics, the internet of things, autonomous vehicles, 3D printing, nanotechnology, biotechnology, materials science, energy storage, and quantum computing’ as particular areas of emerging change influencing our global economies and daily lives (Schwab, 2016).

With regards to the learning city (LC) agenda, digital learning advances include structured e-learning (both formal online learning and a less formal Massive Online Open Course [MOOC] approach) and non-formal types of digitally facilitated learning, all highlighted as essential in ‘learning for all’ agendas. But the LC concept lacks an overt address on policy (e.g. open data governance) and practice (e.g. digitally open learning resources) in relation to developing digital and data skills, competencies and critical knowledges, as well as a discussion of emerging technologies promoting engagement in, and assessment of, the learning cities concept. Even in the years since 2013, when UIL published its 42 Key Features of Learning Cities (UIL, 2015), researchers could not have anticipated the increasing push for open, transparent and less formal data science agendas, as well as the ubiquity of digital engagement in global daily living.

## What are digital and data literacies?

The centrality of digital skills throughout the lifespan for future economic success was recognized back in 2006 by the European Parliament and Council of Europe, which proffered recommendations for digital competences in a ‘knowledge-based society’.

The digital skills agenda remains a core feature of recent UNESCO reports (e.g. Fau and Moreau, 2018), with digital and data literacies growing in popularity and now featured in primary school curricula as well as in the form of data science courses in further and higher education, offered formally and non-formally as MOOCs. Yet such provision continues to focus on skills capacity-building, from simple to more complex digital abilities. Digital literacies are more than just an educational subject, however: they have become integral to a broader ‘life-wide literacies’ conversation (see UNESCO, 2004), enabling citizens to actualize their full potential and adapt to new employment demands, changing resources, and new demands of working and living in the fourth industrial revolution.

When attempting to operationalize digital literacy, the European Commission (2018) report on digital skills and competencies is a solid starting point, but it requires fresh perspectives that move past competency-based conceptions toward wider understandings of digitally and data-empowered citizens (Borges-Rey, 2017). Digital literacy is defined by the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (UNESCO IITE) in its policy briefing paper as comprising ‘a set of basic skills which include the use and production of digital media, information processing and retrieval, participation in social networks for creation and sharing of knowledge, and a wide range of professional computing skills’ (UNESCO IITE, 2011, p. 2). In recent years, though, new modes of represent-

‘Digital literacies are more than just an educational subject, however: they have become integral to a broader “life-wide literacies” conversation.’

ing digital data have emerged, such as novel visualizations and infographics. This shift has triggered more substantial attention to the importance of data and data literacy, as data are now commonly offered to us in digital form, be it digital spreadsheets, open-source coding for data analysis or data that support digital platforms, such as social media. It calls for a move beyond skill sets towards embedding critical digital knowledges in our daily lives.

Despite this growing interest in data literacy, the concept is less well operationalized than digital literacy and, in the case of city-level applications, it is yet to be fully explored and embedded in governance policy and citizen-led urban practices. The digital skills agenda seems far more advanced (Fau and Moreau, 2018). We therefore advocate the development of operationalized digital literacy inclusion frameworks with an emphasis on data empowerment for all, as called for by the increasing openness of the data behind the internet of things: mobile data, app data, social media data, and open programming and coding applications.

Much of these data are free and have therefore led to the creation of citizen 'hactivist' groups and coding clubs, wherein capacity-building in data literacy is symbiotically linked with capacity strengthening of digital literacy. One cannot, for instance, learn to code and analyse a new data set in R<sup>32</sup> without also learning the online platform, communicating with other R coders to troubleshoot, or viewing YouTube clips online to upskill. More importantly, once a user has achieved the desired output, even if it appears as a 3D graph, they need to be able to explore it from multiple angles. These two specific literacies, data and digital, are thus essential to the 'education for all' vision, particularly in view of the changing learning landscape in which less formal settings facilitate new ways of engaging with and learning about digital and data content.

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<sup>32</sup> R is a programming language used for statistical analysis and graphics. See <https://www.r-project.org/about.html> [Accessed 24 August 2021].

## Inclusion in digital and data literacies

Inequalities in digital and data literacies are embedded in wider social and educational inequalities. The relationship between social inclusion, exclusion and digital inclusion is part of the digital divide – or divides – debate. Although rooted in the early mainstreaming of the internet and the World Wide Web, some of the key issues are still relevant when addressing current challenges in digital and data literacies.

As early as 2001, Castells identified the risk of social exclusion due to the inability to participate digitally. He argued that differing levels of access to, and usage of, digital services would ‘add a fundamental cleavage to existing sources of inequality and social exclusion in a complex interaction’ (Castells, 2001, p. 247). In other words, inclusion is not just about having access to digital technologies but also includes the skills, education and sensibilities that enable people to participate in social, economic, political and cultural life (Wessels, 2015; Alsheikh, Rode and Lindley, 2011). Without equal levels of opportunity to develop digital and data skills and logics, people are less able to participate in democratic processes and enter labour markets.

Even in these early debates, there is consensus that digital divides are multidimensional (Wessels, 2010; Helsper, 2012). One key dimension – inequality in education – does impact the ways in which a person can use digital technologies, services and data. The debate is not just about the quality of existing models of education and their underpinning pedagogies, however: as Dutton (2001) argues, people not only need appropriate skills and education to find and mine information and data, they also must be able to turn information and data into knowledge, and then translate this knowledge into action. In sum, education for the digital era needs to firstly equip people to be able to ‘learn to learn’ (ibid.).

As technology and sources of information or data are continuously changing, people must learn how to constantly re-engage. Citizens also must be able to innovate and generate new knowl-

‘Inclusion is not just about having access to digital technologies but also includes the skills, education and sensibilities that enable people to participate in social, economic, political and cultural life.’

edge from the information and data circulating digitally, usually achieved through both formal and informal processes. Education, therefore, needs to support people's ability to learn in multiple forms and formats by providing frameworks and knowledge that enable self-defined learning while also assessing the quality of less formal learning.

Alongside these requirements, models of learning and self-assessment should also address different aspects of digital personal development, ranging from self-monitoring health devices to attributes such as resilience, adaptability, and portfolio and entrepreneurial sensibility in the world of work (Wessels, 2014). Increasingly, in order to engage with the digital society and economy, and to become empowered with technology and the data-verse, people need digital and data competencies alongside imagination.

#### *Digital divides: Current issues*

The digital divide – understood as no or limited access to digital environments – is decreasing, at least in some countries. However, this marked progress should be carefully evaluated and weighed against other emerging and more subtle forms of divides. Digital and data literacies continue to have concerning socio-demographic trends of exclusion. What makes the implementation of new digital solutions more challenging are persistent and multiple digital dividing lines across different socio-demographic groups.

Access to digital and data literacies is limited in countries with a lower GDP (Rashid, 2016) and for the most vulnerable in society,

'People need digital and data competencies alongside imagination.'

such as older adults in urban areas of deprivation (Lido et al., 2016; see also the Colombian AdulTiCoProgram<sup>33</sup>), individuals with mental health issues (Robotham et al., 2016), non-native English speakers (Deen-Swarray, 2016), and citizens facing poverty and global conflict (UNESCO IITE, 2011). UNESCO and Pearson, a digital education company, developed the UNESCO–Pearson Initiative for Literacy with an aim to ‘help low-skilled and low-literate youth and adults participate more effectively in the digital economy and knowledge society and, in the process, develop their skills and literacy’ (UNESCO, 2017).

Although youth inequalities may be balancing out in digital literacy, the question remains as to whether their skills as a whole meet local, regional, national and international employer needs. The Australian Digital Inclusion Index notes the paradox of the three main financial barriers to digital inclusion – affordability, skills and access – in contrast to the tangible financial and quality-of-life benefits of digital engagement (Thomas et al., 2017). However, as mobile phones reach saturation point in many countries and wireless internet becomes increasingly freely available (at least in most urban centres), the studies cited above reveal that digital inequalities may be caused by speed and reliability of access, as well as by how digital skills are deployed for employability.

As the case studies presented in this chapter will demonstrate, significant digital divides emerge from digital environments wherein inadequate preparation or access to information, digital knowledge and critical engagement with different platforms can lead to differentiated digital experiences. The data literacy divides become even more problematic when data science and data literate jobs, arising because of emerging technology, are taken into account. Without widening access to and participation in digitally literate environments for the under-represented learners described above, open data science agendas risk reproducing inequalities both inside and outside formal educational settings.

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33 The Colombian ‘AdulTiCoProgram’ was awarded the 2017 UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy for providing digital skills to seniors. See <https://en.unesco.org/news/reducing-digital-gap-senior-citizens-colombia> [Accessed 25 August 2021].

### *Digital divide: What next?*

Building digital competencies – most notably digital, data and information literacies – will be learned both formally and less formally; we argue therefore that policy needs to support all types of learning, contextualizing those processes within the global and local social contexts (Helsper, 2017). To keep digital divides under scrutiny and ensure that our progress in digital and data literacies does not inadvertently create new exclusionary practices and inequalities, we propose the following integrated framework, which points to vulnerabilities and guidelines for embedding concepts of digital literacy in current learning city agendas. We argue that a key indicator of learning city success is the digital empowerment and participation of its citizens, and, within this, the data empowerment of individuals. Across Europe, it has been noted that, 'ICT spreads throughout our societies, touching more and more parts of our lives, so digital competence has become essential for every individual' (EC, 2018, p. 3). Digital literacies are therefore not only a topical focus for educationalists, but also a life-enabling framework for every citizen.

### *Digital literacies: Embedding within the UNESCO Learning Cities framework*

We understand that any single definition of digital literacies will most likely come at odds with certain contexts in which it is applied. For this reason, and building upon the work developed by UNESCO on media information literacy (MIL), including its

'A key indicator of learning city success is the digital empowerment and participation of its citizens, and, within this, the data empowerment of individuals.'

MIL Cities initiative, as well as our own research partnerships, we propose guidance for digital literacies development that builds on the following principles and can be embedded in learning city agendas and in city- and region-level interventions (in policy and/or practice). We suggest incorporating a 'digital literacies (DL) agenda', which includes digital competencies, data-aware knowledges, and current and emergent digital practices, in learning city policy using the following six guidelines:

1. DL embedded urgently as part of national and regional action plans for supporting active engagement and participation of citizens in their regions;
2. DL to promote inclusively designed technology (information, discourse, data, infrastructure) to support all citizens' capacity to interact with emerging digital technology, with a critical understanding of its multiple levels;
3. DL to contribute to inclusive education for all, tailored, contextualized and made relevant to the technologies AND localities in which communities can thrive;
4. DL to employ a rights-based approach, available to all, using less formal approaches in virtual and face-to-face contexts, to prevent new layers of marginalization between those who have/know/use and those who do not;
5. DL as life-wide literacies, leading to data empowered citizens, encompassing the full spectrum of competencies and learning-to-learn approaches (e.g. from learning how to use digital platforms to understanding data security, protection, management and privacy critically);
6. DL as participatory, participant-led and accessible, not as the preserve of the few educated elite; involving diverse stakeholders in not only the consumption but also the production of digital artefacts (e.g. personal and/or professional websites, digital footprints, etc.).

In sum, we offer the above guidance within the existing Key Features of Learning Cities indicators (UIL, 2015), arguing that digital literacies do not require an 'upgrade' of skills, but a new and deeper understanding of the digital, with its own logics, modes of engagement and challenges (Jones and Hirsu, 2019), and with which we can engage citizens in the co-creation of new ways of doing and less formal ways of learning.



## Vulnerabilities in the face of increasing digital opportunities and creative solutions

The integration of such guidance into the learning cities framework remains a challenge in many countries and regions where digital technologies have not permeated city-level activities, as well as those with digital ubiquity but no overt strategy. Failure of DL inclusivity at the city or regional level is often primarily due to a series of vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities we present along four critical lines: (1) vulnerabilities of access and poor technical infrastructures; (2) vulnerabilities of digitally marginalized groups and communities; (3) vulnerabilities related to digital knowledge, literacies and practice; (4) vulnerabilities related to political will, policy development and economic priorities. We exemplify these in our case studies, offering creative solutions for each of them that can be explored and implemented in other city-region contexts. The vulnerabilities and case study solutions are provided for policy-makers, urban planners and educational institutions alike to consider their regional context and orientation towards increasing opportunities for digital lifelong learning, negotiating questions of format, quality, coverage, impact and inclusion. The diversity of contexts requires a thorough understanding of the digital learning landscape and a comprehensive approach to digital and data literacies to capture both the formal and the increasingly relevant informal sector, in which many pop-up initiatives and emergent citizen-led actions and concerns are currently raised.

### *1. Vulnerabilities of access and poor technical infrastructures*

Digital access remains a critical issue in many rural and poverty-afflicted urban areas. Underdeveloped infrastructures tend to divide communities and add a new layer of exclusion from full access to city resources, services and learning opportunities. Unbalanced distribution of networks and technologies excludes significant groups of people and affect all aspects of life, from health-related information and well-being to resources such as employment and citizenship participation.

*Case study 1: 'Al Mar'ah Wal Hayah': Giza Governorate, Egypt  
(Contributed by Dr Ghaith H. Fariz, UNESCO)<sup>34</sup>*

Recognizing some of these critical points, the education team at the the UNESCO Cairo Office, with the support of the Ministry of Education and Technical Education (MoETE), the Adult Education Authority, the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education (ANLAE), and other concerned national partners, initiated a pilot project focused on advancing girls' and women's literacy in the Giza Governorate. Phase 1, which took place from March 2017 to November 2018, welcomed 443 female participants and was funded by Microsoft. Phase 2, which ran from February to October 2019, welcomed 244 girls and women and was funded by the Weidong Cloud Education Group of China, which supports cloud-based education services around the world.

In both phases, the teaching of literacy skills was embedded into an integrated curriculum called Al Mar'ah Wal Hayah (Women and life), which comprised empowerment activities for women's social, cultural and economic growth. Lessons included Arabic-language instruction and mathematics, as well as digital curricula, training workshops and income-generating activities (e.g. handicrafts, sewing and food-related businesses), and awareness seminars on social traditions, violence against women, the risks of early marriage, and developing decision-making skills.

It is important to note that the project responded to Egypt's wider national mandate to increase literacy levels and tested the novel concept of integrating ICT in literacy. Instead of teaching literacy skills or digital skills separately, the programme incorporated these skills along with life skills and creative activities, which motivated girls and women to learn and make connections between their learning process and everyday life activities. With elements related to income generation, the programme had an immediate impact on reducing dropout rates and maintaining learners' interest

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<sup>34</sup> Case study contributed by Dr. Ghaith H. Fariz, Director, UNESCO Regional Bureau for Sciences in the Arab States (UNESCO Cairo Office; Cluster Office for Egypt and Sudan) and UNESCO Representative to Egypt.

during the learning phase, giving them incentives not only to further their knowledge, but to also see the immediate monetary effects of their enriched knowledge and new competencies. Given the high success rate of the programme (92 per cent of learners passed the Adult Education Authority examination), current plans aim to roll and scale up the project from the pilot to the national phase.

## *2. Vulnerabilities of digitally marginalized groups and communities*

When the issue of access becomes a limiting condition only for certain groups of individuals, solutions towards digital inclusion can be activated by increasing awareness and openness of digital access. In these contexts, infrastructures, old or new, are already in place and could be extended, implemented and made available to all (especially in the case of older adult learners, or women in patriarchal or financially insecure contexts). Vulnerabilities of digitally marginalized groups may be determined by demographic and socio-economic marginalization along gender, age, ability, ethnic and racial lines, or along multiple marginalized identities and levels of inequality through an intersectional lens.

*Case study 2: Workers by Self-Design project: Sanandaj, Islamic Republic of Iran, and Manila, Philippines (Contributed by Workers by Self-Design)<sup>35</sup>*

The Workers by Self-Design project (January–June 2019) aimed to develop an international network of academic and non-academic stakeholders invested in: (a) identifying gaps, needs and potential interventions around women’s digital literacies, entrepreneurial training opportunities, and vulnerabilities in unstable national and regional contexts, and (b) scoping good practice and interventions that enhance and facilitate women’s active participation

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<sup>35</sup> Case study contributed by the Workers by Self-Design: Digital Literacies and Women’s Changing Roles project, funded by the Scottish Funding Council/Global Challenges Research Fund. Investigators include Dr Lavinia Hirsu, Dr Katarzyna Borkowska, Prof. Matthew Chalmers (University of Glasgow); Prof. Zenaïda Q. Reyes (Philippine Normal University); Dr Juvy Lizette Gervacio (UP Open University); Atty. Marion Ivy Decena (Department of Science and Technology, Philippines); Lamiah Hashemi, Dr Farzad Eskandari (University of Kurdistan); Seyed Mohammad Taher Hosseini (University of Kurdistan), and Dr Jennifer Rode (UCL Knowledge Lab).

in challenging employment and workplace markets. The network was established as a result of academic research that identified various forms of exclusion of women from job markets affected by global crises (climate related or human induced, i.e. conflict, migration, effects of economic sanctions) in key cities such as Sanandaj, Islamic Republic of Iran, and Manila, the Philippines.

Through emergent partnerships, representatives from three countries (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Islamic Republic of Iran and the Philippines) have benefited from face-to-face and online networking with the goal of strengthening and establishing new collaborations to tackle the issue of women's engagement with digital literacies and their changing roles. The network is relevant not only for the immediate contexts in which the partners work, but also for a wide range of contexts that currently address questions such as: 'How do workers design their future when traditional career pathways are threatened by unstable environments? How do women approach new literacies (digital and non-digital) when natural disasters and human-induced social and political instabilities threaten their work-related journeys?' (Workers by Self-Design).

The network brought forward a few creative solutions to support women's future pathways. In the case of Sanandaj, the Technology Incubator Center at the Iranian Research Organization for Science and Technologies (IROST) encourages women to build their craft and business skills into viable, long-term projects. In Manila, an emergent network within the Philippines' Department of Science and Technology (DOST) brings women inventors together to share experiences, gain new expertise on how to secure patents and commercialize their ideas, and promote their growing businesses.

In both cities, women are making extraordinary efforts to find employment, cut intermediaries, and secure more stable revenues in contexts where opportunities seem to be unequally available to men and women. Digital literacies can make a significant impact on their journeys by supporting their aspirations and products (ranging from eco-tourism, traditional crafts and homemade

products to technology-embedded clothing and other inventions). The Workers by Self-Design network aims to identify such innovative solutions, new forms of partnerships and citizen-oriented solutions (e.g. e-learning and e-knowledge exchange) to help more communities reach their full potential and benefit from their creative and working power.

### *3. Vulnerabilities related to digital knowledge, literacies and practice*

An emergent set of vulnerabilities that are harder to identify do not arise from the traditionally identified digital divide (digital access vs non-access). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, more subtle forms of exclusion are related to the ability to critically and reflectively deal with issues such as privacy, data misuse (by private and political entities), data ownership/authorship, and social media (mis)use. Even in contexts where access to new technologies and infrastructures exists, disparities from within the digital platforms may create further disparities and marginalization, limiting empowered usage. Citizens engage with these platforms according to different literacy competencies that they can draw upon. Not being able to deploy such competencies critically, effectively and reflectively may prevent communities from benefiting fully from city-level digital ‘upgrades’.

#### *Case study 3: Digital and data policy and practice:*

##### *Glasgow and Stirling, Scotland*

*(Contributed by Dr Greg Singh and Dr Eddy Borges-Rey, University of Stirling, Joe Hall, Creative Stirling, and Rhiannon Law, Urban Big Data Centre, Glasgow)<sup>36</sup>*

In response to these challenges, the city of Glasgow in Scotland published the *Digital Glasgow Strategy* (Digital Glasgow, 2018), a comprehensive action plan to achieve two main goals: (1) the development of a competitive and innovative global digital economy, and (2) the establishment of Glasgow as ‘one of the most

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<sup>36</sup> Case study contributed by Dr Greg Singh and Dr Eddy Borges-Rey (University of Stirling), Royal Society of Edinburgh funded Scottish Government Arts and Humanities Network, Life in Data; Joe Hall, Founder and Director of Creative Stirling; Rhiannon Law, Urban Big Data Centre; funded by Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) grants ES/S007105/1 and ES/L011921/1.

pioneering and innovative smart cities in the world' (ibid., p. 7). The strategy recognizes the importance of digital inclusion and participation, and commits to engaging citizens in order to decrease social and economic exclusion and to enhance the quality of everyday life.

Also working towards these goals in the city's Urban Big Data Centre (UBDC), which is funded by the University of Glasgow and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), which is part of the UK's Research and Innovation (UKRI) initiative. UKRI was developed to harness the power of novel data emerging from technology streams and use it to improve urban citizens' lives, through innovation in transportation, housing, urban governance and education.

Through its remit of making such data more open to the public, the UBDC joined the Sterling University-based Life in Data, 'a multidisciplinary network of scholars, creative and social entrepreneurs, policy-makers, industry, educators, and civic, public, and voluntary sectors, to deliberate the creative and pedagogical challenges, and civic potentials of data literacy' (University of Sterling, 2021). Life in Data does this by mapping data literacy, openness, education policy and creative data innovation in Scotland through a collaboration between Scottish higher education institutions (HEIs), the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS), and public- and third-sector partners to explore the emergent field of data literacy, particularly in smaller cities and harder-to-reach regions (ibid.).

As part of its work, Life in Data also organizes 'knowledge exchange' workshops to debate, discuss and interrogate current and shifting understandings of data literacy around several themes, mapping these out as a set of thematic provocations. 'Big ideas from small cities', for example, explored how data literacy can enhance our understanding of the places we live in and our sense of community and belonging. 'Bringing data to earth', meanwhile, looked at ways to raise awareness of data and its role in societal and cultural engagement. Discussions were often open and

public-facing, with live-streamed or post-workshop video materials and a lively Twitter stream (#LifeinDataStir) also available. Participating stakeholders included Wikimedia UK; The Data Lab; the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA); the Scottish Cities Alliance; the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations; and Creative Scotland, a social enterprise for innovation in the creative industries, among others. The impact of such cross-disciplinary collaborations for cities such as Stirling, in central Scotland, include the creation of the Participatory Design and Open Data Platforms for a Data Commons in Scotland project, which uses a case study of waste management and its open online data strategy to improve public services (Singh, 2019a). Nationally, this has led to paradigm-changing contributions to the development of policy for a robust, learnable, open-data infrastructure in the UK (Singh, 2019b).

Through this network, a fruitful partnership also emerged with Creative Stirling, a social enterprise committed to promoting creative approaches to learning that also explore new technologies, beginning with coding clubs for young people (CoderDojo).<sup>37</sup> This has led to funded research into meeting the needs of young people to progress their interest in more specific areas of digital and data technology for creative career trajectories.

Moreover, Creative Stirling has engaged academics and technology sector experts (CodeBase Stirling) to broaden the programme of digital skills activity to include robotics, artificial intelligence (AI) and data science. Emerging social enterprises straddle the needs of the private and public sectors and situate themselves nicely within the current STEAM education movement (science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics), noting that digital design and creativity are essential to cities of the future. This need is reflected by Buckingham (2010), whose case studies in the web, gaming and digital media literacy articulate the need for critical approaches to these digital literacy domains *before* creating them or using them as resources for learning. The initiatives

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<sup>37</sup> See <https://coderdojoscotland.com/clubs/stirling> [Accessed 27 August 2021].

above therefore aim to instil a culture of in-depth digital engagement across all sectors of society and to prevent future digital literacy gaps.

#### *4. Vulnerabilities related to political will, policy development and economic priorities.*

Digital policy is of increasing relevance to cities, regions and countries, as data and digital technologies are used to direct and inform city-level action plans, using up-to-date (and sometimes) real-time data and to form the directions of educational and occupational trends (Williamson, 2014). Such influence can be seen in the UNESCO (2019) brief on digital policy for moving national and regional cultural agendas forward. One logical vehicle through which national and local government can have this influence in the area of digital literacy inclusion is the public library (see Thompson et al. [2014] for global case studies of policy implementation in libraries, allowing local governments to reach the wider public with delivery of formal and less formal knowledge exchanges). Höchtl, Parycek and Schöllhammer (2016) have advocated for approaches moving beyond e-governance and e-bureaucracy to engage technology and data and to transform the very nature of policy-making itself. They suggest that real-time data and citizen metrics can help policy development in mid-cycle and can facilitate more flexibility in meeting the economic and social needs of cities and citizens. To showcase the critical role of policies in supporting digitally aware city planning and e-policy, we present a skills agenda from Singapore and the ways in which it formulates new directions in relation to lifelong digital learning and urban infrastructure.

#### *Case study 4: SkillsFuture, Singapore*

*(Contributed by Dr Michael Fung and the SkillsFuture Singapore Team)<sup>38</sup>*

At a recent UNESCO–UIL joint workshop with the Institute for Adult Learning (IAL) Singapore on developing frameworks to monitor lifelong learning, there was diverse coverage of transfor-

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38 Case study contributed by Dr. Michael Fung, Deputy Chief Executive (Industry), Chief Human Resource Officer and Chief Data Officer at SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG).



mational skills agendas worldwide This included assessment of lifelong learning by the European Commission (Sekmokas, 2019a) and a broader review of international frameworks for monitoring skills and adult learning and their links to industrial and economic development policies (Sekmokas, 2019b). Mark Keese, Head of the Skills and Employability Division in the Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs at the OECD, presented the Priorities for Adult Learning dashboard (OECD, 2021), reiterating the organization's message that the 'world of work is changing. Digitalization, globalization and population ageing are having a profound impact on the type and quality of jobs that are available and the skills needed to perform them' (ibid.). Work was also presented on the European Commission Joint Research Centre's Competence Centre on Composite Indicators and Scoreboards (JRC-COIN),<sup>39</sup> and participants revisited the Composite Learning Index (CLI) and the European Lifelong Learning Indicators Index (ELLI-Index) for quantifying learning cities, thereby initiating conversation on how city-regions might implement and assess their learning city success using emerging digital and data technologies.

Singapore launched the SkillsFuture movement (<https://www.skillsfuture.gov.sg>) in 2015 as a national skills strategy to strengthen further the foundations for a highly skilled, productive and innovative economy by supporting workforce development and enterprise transformation in the face of disruptions. In addition to serving an economic objective, SkillsFuture seeks to help individuals realize their potential, regardless of their starting points. Its Deputy Chief Executive, Dr Michael Fung, described the movement as a multi-stakeholder approach, working across government agencies, industry bodies, employers, unions, and education and training institutions, to draw up a range of skills frameworks covering various job roles across all major industry sectors. The technical, generic (transversal) and emerging skills associated within each job role were defined and articulated, and training programmes from an extensive course directory were mapped to the identified skills. In addition, conventional skills forecasting ap-

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39 For more information on JRC-COIN, visit [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/composite-indicators/about\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/composite-indicators/about_en) [Accessed 27 August 2021].

proaches were augmented by technology tools and big data to increase the agility and responsiveness of the skills training system in meeting industry and economic needs specific to the region.

The MySkillsFuture portal (<https://www.myskillsfuture.gov.sg/content/portal/en/index.html>) enables Singaporeans to create individualized learning and career profiles, access labour market information, explore training opportunities to acquire skills aligned with industry needs, and identify job opportunities aligned with their career goals. By bringing together these various sources of information, the portal is capable of making recommendations of suitable training courses and job openings based on the educational and job history, profiles and career aspirations of individuals.

With the increasing pace of transformation across all industry sectors and enterprises brought about by globalization and digitalization, the competencies and literacies needed by employers are evolving rapidly. For instance, there is an acute shortage of skills in emerging areas such as AI, data analytics, robotics, cybersecurity and the industrial internet of things (IIoT). To keep up with such change, capacity-building can be accessed through public institutes of higher learning, private training providers, community groups and employers with progressive human capital practices; however, political will and strategic regional approaches, such as that seen in Singapore, is needed to accelerate the acquisition of region-specific emerging competencies and digital knowledge across its diverse population segments.

### Key Issues and policy recommendations

If we are to design responsible learning cities, we need to develop discourses, policies and action plans that not only embrace new technologies but also enable all citizens to deploy digital literacies critically. Additionally, citizens must be able to remain connected and actively engaged in their communities and truly empowered to use their data in the digital worlds around them. Technology-integrated solutions are currently being explored to address the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); however, these

'If we are to design responsible learning cities, we need to develop discourses, policies and action plans that not only embrace new technologies but also enable all citizens to deploy digital literacies critically.'

solutions will not be fully successful unless citizens have access to them and develop awareness, understanding and critical capacities to contribute to them.

To realize future smart learning cities, we argue that knowledge sharing and capacity strengthening across a wide range of contexts is critical to ensure digital inclusion and to maximize human resources. When reviewing academic literature and our case studies, which include private, public, third-sector and social-enterprise contexts – and most often cross-sector partnerships – common themes emerge with regards to digitally inclusive interventions, strategies and policy. The very strong skills and competency-building agenda promoted by UNESCO for the last 20 years has created a solid backbone for the practical implementation of creating digitally imbued societies; however, we have proposed some considerations of the ways in which advancing technology and skills agendas alone may actually serve to *increase* vulnerabilities, thus reproducing digital inequalities. These recommendations therefore serve as starting points for more robust conversations around the development and critical engagement with inclusive digital literacies guidelines, moving city- and region-level planning toward more intentional implementation of best practice for digitally empowered learning cities and regions.

- Citizens should be directly involved in the processes of development, implementation and evaluation of emerging digital technologies and related educational tools.
- New technologies and city-level innovative projects and policies should include learning plans to ensure access, use, participation, motivation, critical engagement and feedback gained from diverse groups of citizens.
- Experiences with digitally-oriented learning models and the more important self-directed learning assessment should be shared for consultation, enhancement and identification of best practice between learning cities, preferably using flexible, real-time, online knowledge sharing spaces.
- Programmes covering digital literacies should draw on the most recently available literature and evidence-based research, while building in space for flexible, adaptable and emergent learning

frameworks as digital transformations continue to permeate and challenge our communities.

- Data empowerment should be embedded within the heart of digital literacy agendas, including critical approaches to the use of one's own data as well as the use of open data relevant to one's community and daily life.
- Policy and political decisions should be made explicitly for digital literacy capacity-building, and diverse stakeholders, including citizen activist and community groups as well as formal and less formal educational organizations, should participate in mobilization.

To address some of these recommendations, an immediate solution would be to develop an online interactive interface which may incorporate – but go beyond – simple scoreboards and quantitative indices. We are seeking a flexible platform on which digitally empowered cities could act in a participatory process to share innovative digital solutions, evidence examples of good practice for embedding citizens' digital empowerment, and map out city digital landscapes including citizen needs and learning opportunities. The focus would be on sharing learning inclusion data but also on digital inclusion narratives and digitally inclusive learning city discourses. Shared experiences from learning city networks of using technology to bridge digital divides would be essential, along with best practice in open data infrastructure (locally, nationally and internationally). For instance, the UBDC has begun to harness the power of less formal knowledge exchange mechanisms, planning recourses such as digital and data tutorials on YouTube, webinars and less formal online badge systems for acknowledging self-directed learning online – all potential tools to be deployed on such a digitally inclusive platform. In this way, UNESCO learning city networks could add their own best practice to existing case studies on digital inclusion for all. More importantly, the platform could harness existing data, e-initiatives and emergent digital challenges for the benefit of societies in different parts of the world. In doing so, we move across disciplinary, sectoral and methodological boundaries.

By highlighting effective urban digital strategies and practices, we can see that the measurement, promotion and priority of digital

literacies (including formal, informal and other emergent models of learning) is of utmost importance. The nature of learning is being driven online, both by organizations such as schools and higher education institutions, and by citizens themselves, as evidenced by open knowledge sharing in the upskilling of data scientists with the R programming language and the emergence of hackathons to share skills and explore data for the public good. To strengthen learning cities, different stakeholders can contribute with their own expertise to align their agendas and implement creative city-level solutions that not only make new technologies work, but also enable communities to enjoy a better quality of life and make informed decisions about their active roles as citizens.

We believe that there is a need to make ‘lifelong digital inclusion for all’ and ‘data empowerment for all’ as explicit messages for citizens, and that learning new skills alone is not enough to be kept in the digital conversation. If lay understandings of the crucial role of reading and writing for future life success are well-established now, similar attitudes can also be nurtured around open coding, open analysis and open reporting. These should be supported and embraced as best practice moving forward for governmental, educational and more general research purposes. Only then will we be empowering our citizens to engage with their own data and that of their communities/regions. Robustly designed learning cities do not simply reach towards their citizens but also involve them at all levels to identify and investigate needs and directions.

The digital future of learning cities can be planned now. Rapidly transforming technologies, including robotics, wearable sensors, AI and virtual networking tools will merge and integrate increasingly with everyday activities. Cities must be more responsive than ever in harnessing emerging innovation to include citizens in formal and less formal types of digital learning and to gain a more critical understanding of digital literacy. As the technological and material aspects continue to pose challenges, we cannot lose sight of the human dimension of such developments and their user-centred solutions in our attempt to solve them. To realize the full ambition of SDG 4, policy agendas should contain provisions

that include learning cities and their citizens in delivering the digital systems needed for flexible and targeted digital skills aimed at local, national and international needs. In this way, intranational and international knowledge exchange will be key to delivering appropriate lifelong learning in digital and data literacies.

Any new digital solution should be citizen-driven with a human-centred component and must include a critical data empowerment component, one that encompasses openness vs privacy tensions as well as data protection, management and usage concerns. Global society is quickly learning that it is not enough to be digitally skilled or to be able to play with open data: we must also be empowered to know how digital technologies work and what should be done ethically with the data emerging from the digital world. With the integration of an inclusive digital literacies framework and an embedded digital literacy agenda, future learning cities can build inclusive communities from the beginning. They can work with digitally open data and infrastructure rather than reintegrating and upgrading excluded communities, and they can empower citizens to engage critically with their own technologies.

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# Chapter 3

## → Addressing youth at risk (NEETs)

### Introduction

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The rate of urbanization in countries of the Global South has been much faster than the rate at which cities have been able to generate jobs for their rapidly growing populations. As a result, in many cities, a large proportion of the population – especially women and young people – remain unemployed or underemployed (and underpaid, respectively). Globally, young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults (UN-Habitat, 2018). The impact of their level of education and training on this situation can be significant: according to the most recent estimates, 102 million youth lack basic literacy competencies at the global level (UIS and GEMR, 2019). In Egypt, for example, the highest risk groups for becoming NEETs (‘not in employment, education or training’) are the uneducated and non-literate youth (Bardak, Maseda and Rosso, 2015).

By current estimates, over 260 million young people – or 18 per cent of all children, adolescents and youth aged 6 to 17 years – were out of school in 2017 (UIS and GEMR, 2019, p. 3). According to recent projections on progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on education, if current trends continue, one in six children aged 6 to 17 years will still be excluded in 2030,

when the Education 2030 Agenda should be fully implemented. The forecasted completion rate will instead be 93 per cent in primary, 85 per cent in lower secondary and 60 per cent in upper secondary education. This means that, at the current pace, only six in 10 young people will be finishing secondary school in 2030 (ibid., p. 4).

Apart from school entry and completion, it is also necessary to ensure that students achieve a basic standard of learning while they are in school. However, cross-national assessments to determine if students have reached a minimum level of proficiency at each of the three points of measurement (i.e. Grades 2 or 3, end of primary, end of lower secondary) and for each of the two competencies measured in this target (reading and mathematics) give reasons for concern: many of the students who were tested had not mastered the basic competencies (literacy and numeracy)<sup>40</sup> at a proficiency level that is required to perform work-related tasks.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, it is foreseen that around 20 per cent of youth from low-income countries will be unable to read by 2030 based on current trends (UNESCO, 2018; UIS and GEMR, 2019). These are and will be young people in vulnerable situations at risk of exclusion.

The rise in the levels of young people (aged between 15 and 24 years) who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs) has become a policy concern in many countries throughout the world, although they may use different terms to designate this situation. At the global level, 30.4 per cent of young women and 12.7 per cent of young men were classified as NEETs in 2018 – this means, on average, more than one in five young people are not in employment, education or training (21.2%). The gender gap is especially wide in lower middle income countries, where young women are more than three times as likely as young men to have NEET status (ILO, 2019). It is worth noting that aggregate NEET rates mask heterogeneous trends among young people in terms

'According to recent projections on progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on education, if current trends continue, one in six children aged 6 to 17 years will still be excluded in 2030, when the Education 2030 Agenda should be fully implemented.'

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40 According to the latest report, 387 million (56%) of children of primary school age and 230 million (61%) of adolescents did not reach the minimum proficiency level in reading. Similar estimates apply for minimum learning proficiency in mathematics (UNESCO, 2018, p. 125).

41 In India, even youth with basic numeracy skills cannot perform simple daily tasks needed at work (UNESCO, 2018, p. 126).

of age, level of schooling, gender, disability, and race or ethnicity. However, very few countries seem to generate disaggregated data, and most of them rely on estimates on the basis of available data sets.

This chapter focuses on local policies and practices that promote inclusion, equity and lifelong learning in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDGs 4, 5 and 8,<sup>42</sup> and which pay particular attention to the needs and expectations of youth living in cities and urban areas who are at risk of becoming NEETs. Evidence of specific policies at the level of local government could be found only in few cases, however, and primarily from cities in Europe and North America. At the national level, studies and reports on successful policies and practices for youth development, education and employment could again be found for Europe and North America, but less so for sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Arab States, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

It is at the local level where youth interact most regularly with public authorities and institutions, use public services, and participate in the development of their society, and yet information on how national authorities collaborate with cities or local governments in the development of inclusive policies addressing youth with NEET status is almost non-existent in the accessible documentation. A few available case studies do provide pointers for effective action to tackle the NEET challenge at the city or regional level, however; these case studies mainly pertain to countries within the European Union, where the NEET theme managed to attract public attention to the multifaceted vulnerabilities of young people.

The high NEET rates in low- and middle-income countries are driven by the large numbers of young men and, above all, young

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42 SDG 4: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.'; SDG 5: 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.'; SDG 8: 'Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.' To read more about these and the other SDGs, visit <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> [Accessed 31 August 2021].

women who are ‘inactive’ and thus do not participate either in the labour force (of the formal sector) or in (formal) education. This contrasts with high-income countries in which around half of NEETs are unemployed, but available for the (formal) labour market and looking for employment. Reducing youth NEET rates is one of the primary targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development under SDG 8; however, given the huge education and gender disparities in low- and middle-income countries, the goal of reducing the youth NEET rate is also directly linked to SDGs 4 and 5 (ILO, 2017, p. 2) (see **Box 1**).

### **Box 1. Key youth-specific targets in the SDGs**

\* 4.4: ‘By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship’;

\* 4.6: ‘By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy’;

\* 8.5: ‘By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value’;

\* 8.6: ‘By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training’;<sup>43</sup>

\* 8.b: ‘By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact<sup>44</sup> of the International Labour Organization (ILO)’;

\* 13.b: ‘Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and Small Island Developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities.’

*Source:* UN, 2021

43 The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) has designated one indicator for this target, SDG indicator 8.6.1: ‘Proportion of youth (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training’ (ILO, 2019, p. 59). As the global NEET rate has decreased by a mere 2 percentage points between 2005 and 2018, the target to substantially reduce NEET rates by 2020 will almost certainly be missed (ibid. p. 3).

44 ILO Member States adopted the Global Jobs Pact, a global policy instrument to address the social and employment impact of economic crises, in 2009. See <https://www.ilo.org/jobspect/about/lang-en/index.htm> [Accessed 31 August 2021].

The next section focuses on ways in which the educational and training needs of youth at risk are identified and monitored at different levels. Using the framework as the analytical lens, it then examines examples of urban and national policies, strategies, plans, initiatives and programmes with regard to the inclusion of youth-related learning, training and employment activities. This also includes the identification of enabling factors, challenges and lessons learned. In a later section, governance and implementation arrangements are analysed. In the concluding section, some key issues are highlighted and recommendations for policy-makers, providers and practitioners are summarized.

### Conceptual framework on inclusion and lifelong learning in cities for youth at risk (NEETs)

The development of a conceptual framework on inclusion and lifelong learning in cities calls for clarity of what is meant by ‘youth at risk’ as well as a description of the steps required to arrive at effective measures to address the needs and expectations of NEETs. It is important to highlight that ‘NEET status’ (being a NEET) must be analysed in conjunction with the ‘NEET process’ (becoming a NEET and transitioning out of the NEET status). While a major focus of any such framework will be on local-level governance, any action regarding youth development has to be framed within the broader context of national, regional and even international policies, responsibilities and influences. In other words, the framework needs to be both comprehensive and process-oriented to reflect related dynamics.

The term ‘NEET’ – neither in employment nor in education or training – first emerged in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the late 1980s; yet it wasn’t until 1999 that it was formally introduced at the political level in the UK with the publication of the government’s ‘Bridging the Gap’ report.<sup>45</sup> By the beginning of the millennium, similar concepts referring to disengaged or excluded youth had been adopted in

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45 To read the full report, visit <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/151119/2/bridging-the-gap.pdf> [Accessed 31 August 2021].

almost all EU member states as well as in Japan, New Zealand and, more recently, the People's Republic of China. The use of 'NEET' as a term and/or category has been criticized for being too heterogeneous or, in some instances, for being used to stigmatize (Maguire, 2015; Gardner et al., 2017). As a consequence of the lack of an internationally recognized definition of NEET, the characteristics of the youth classified as NEET differ greatly from country to country, making cross-country comparisons difficult, even at the regional level (Bardak, Maseda and Rosso, 2015; Mascherini, 2017).

As the proportion of youth aged 15 to 24 years who are not in employment, education or training – i.e. the NEET rate<sup>46</sup> – is one of the indicators for SDG 8 ('Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all'), the description of the youth NEET rate by the ILO and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) can be of help with an internationally agreed concept (ILO, 2016; UIS, 2017). The NEET indicator is regularly produced by ILO, and data are currently available for nearly 100 countries (UIS, 2017). The UIS, in turn, makes use of NEET data produced by the ILO.<sup>47</sup>

NEET rates are calculated preferentially for youth defined as persons aged 15 to 24, but it is important to keep in mind when studying these rates that not all persons complete their education by the age of 24 (ibid.). For the purpose of monitoring SDG indicator 8.6.1,<sup>48</sup> data are disaggregated by sex and education level according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).<sup>49</sup> It distinguishes two different sub-groups: (1) unemployed youth not in education or training and (2) youth outside

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46 The NEET rate needs to be distinguished from the youth unemployment rate (Eurofound, 2012).

47 Preliminary results from the analysis by the UIS were presented to the Technical Cooperation Group on the Indicators for SDG 4—Education 2030 (TCG), which met in January 2018 (Huebler, 2018).

48 Please refer to Footnote 43.

49 The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) is the framework used to compare statistics on the education systems of countries worldwide. It is an important tool used to facilitate international comparisons and to benchmark and monitor progress on international education goals. It is used to produce comparable data and indicators that reflect today's education priorities and policies. ISCED covers all formal and non-formal education programmes offered at any stage of life. ISCED was first developed by UNESCO in 1976. The classification was updated in 1997, 2011 and 2013. See <http://uis.unesco.org/en/isced-mappings> [Accessed 31 August 2021].



the labour force not in education or training (ILO, 2016; UIS, 2017). The NEET indicator produced by Eurostat<sup>50</sup> for the EU member states covers nine different age groups<sup>51</sup> and is disaggregated by sex, labour market status (unemployed, inactive) and education level (at least lower-secondary attainment/at most upper-secondary attainment).

The identification of risk factors and reasons of vulnerability as well as of specific sub-groups are necessary steps to define the policy response to address the NEET challenge. While descriptive indicators and statistics are essential and insightful, more in-depth analysis is required to understand the characteristics and factors that put young people at risk of becoming NEETs. Moreover, given the huge diversity which exists within the NEET group and the different realities faced by NEETs, it is necessary to identify specific sub-groups in more detail. This breakdown needs to be operationalized for each (country) context, including at the sub-national and local levels (see, for example, the seven NEET sub-groups for the European context identified by Eurofound, 2016, p. 61).

Analysing the particular composition of the NEET population and the degree of vulnerability (risk levels) is very important within a particular context to understand the specific needs and address them with targeted policies, strategies and programme interventions. Equally important for this purpose is, of course, to identify the motivations, frustrations, aspirations and needs of young people affected by the NEET condition by listening to their own voices. Young people are at a critical juncture in their lives. This is a period of transition, where life-changing decisions are made on many levels, especially in terms of education and work. A better understanding of what lies behind the decision to study or to work, or a combination of both, is crucial for the design of tailor-made public policies and interventions.

‘Young people are at a critical juncture in their lives. This is a period of transition, where life-changing decisions are made on many levels, especially in terms of education and work. A better understanding of what lies behind the decision to study or to work is crucial.’

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50 [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics\\_on\\_young\\_people\\_neither\\_in\\_employment\\_nor\\_in\\_education\\_or\\_training](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics_on_young_people_neither_in_employment_nor_in_education_or_training) [Accessed 31 August 2021].

51 15–17/15–19/15–24/15–29/15–34/18–24/20–24/20–34/25–29

Identifying the reasons for youth vulnerability (why an individual is out of school, training and/or work) is the first step in enabling policy-makers to understand different NEET groups and eventually come up with targeted policy interventions. Identifying the main determinants for being a NEET is also important for prevention and/or early policy intervention. There is a heterogeneity of risk factors – ranging from social, economic, cultural and individual factors – that are predictors of the likelihood for a young person to become a NEET. The family and migration background can also play an important role as well as any kind of disadvantage such as a disability, ethnicity, geographic location and/or gender. Usually, the NEET status arises from a complex interplay of different factors, which have different weights according to the specific context.

A key distinction should be made between policies and practices that seek to prevent young people from becoming NEET and those that seek to re-engage young people, supporting them in their transition out of the NEET status. The European Training Foundation (ETF) differentiates policy responses towards NEETs as: (a) ‘prevention policies’, i.e. preventing early school leaving and facilitating the smooth transition from school to work; (b) ‘reintegration policies’, i.e. supporting young people re-entering the educational system or the labour market; and (c) ‘compensation policies’, i.e. social assistance measures as a last resort in alleviating exclusion (Bardak, Maseda and Rosso, 2015, p. 51). In practice, these different kinds of policies and programmes often overlap and combine a holistic set of measures.

In addition to the need to distinguish between ‘preventive’ and ‘reintegration’ strategies, two other key factors need to be taken into account when devising policies targeted at NEET young people: the first is that not all young people who are NEET are ‘vulnerable’ or ‘marginalized’, the second is the rising number of young people whose destinations are ‘unknown’ rather than NEET. The latter may be the result of an absence or a dismantling of tracking and support services. Irrespective of the cause, the spectre of an emerging underclass, which is distinct from the

NEET group and does not attract interventions due to its lack of any policy identity, cannot be discounted. Therefore, effective tracking systems are essential for the targeting of policy interventions (Maguire, 2013).

For this framework, we suggest a process-oriented approach that understands 'youth' as a transition period in a person's life, from education to employment/work, and extends from preventive interventions that identify young people at risk and try to keep them 'on track' to support, assistance and re-engagement interventions that tackle the issue of bringing young people who have entered the NEET status or became a NEET 'back on track'. Moreover, this approach reflects a lifelong learning perspective by zooming into a particular period in a person's life, in which learning and development are crucial.

For this purpose, we adapt a proposal for the European context (Mascherini, 2017) consisting of policies and measures grouped into five broad categories or stages of a process, which may overlap partially into combined strategies, and which take into consideration that, for many young people, the pathway from education to work is not a straight one. The categories are:

1. Measures to prevent early school leaving;
2. Measures to reintegrate early school leavers;
3. School-to-work transition policies;
4. Measures to foster employability;
5. Measures to remove practical and logistical barriers to employment.

**1. Measures to prevent early school leaving** should begin during early childhood. Available research suggests that early intervention, such as family literacy and learning programmes, is critical to prepare children from vulnerable families for school and to prevent them from failure and dropping out (UIL, 2017b). Once at school, there are different support measures in place to improve students' chances of staying in education or training, including diagnostic measures, area-based policies, alternative learning

environments, innovative teaching methods, career guidance, educational assistance, financial incentives, and parental engagement.

**2. Measures to reintegrate early school leavers** must also include the provision of special support, addressing more complex personal issues and financial incentives. It can also consist of alternative (non-formal) and flexible learning programmes.

**3. School-to-work transition policies**, which intervene at a slightly later stage of the pathway, promote a smooth transition from learning to earning and therefore include measures such as the establishment of one-stop-shop services, which address the diverse needs of young people in a single agency, along with information, guidance and counselling, work-experience opportunities and skills development ('earn while you learn' jobs), and the promotion of youth entrepreneurship and self-employment.

**4. Measures to foster employability** are policies that intervene closer to the labour market entry point, such as apprenticeships and vocational trainings, training courses in competences required by employers, and internships.

**5. Measures to remove practical and logistical barriers**, the final stage along the pathway, are for those in need of special support. Related policy measures include addressing specific disadvantages and support needs (e.g. young women and people with disabilities), facilitating mobility and financial support and encouraging employers to take on (disengaged) young people through salary subsidies and incentives (Mascherini, 2017).<sup>52</sup>

At the global level, more young women than men are classified as NEETs, thus the above-mentioned policy measures require a particular gender dimension. Each of the stages described for the transition from education and training into employment or (paid) work needs to be analysed with a gender lens to identify and

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<sup>52</sup> The strengths and weaknesses of all mentioned policy measures for the European context are discussed in detail in Mascherini, 2017, pp. 12–29.

remove context-specific barriers to gender equality. In some cases, existing disparities are so wide that measures of ‘positive discrimination’ (i.e. priority and higher resource allocation given to areas or NEETs identified as the most vulnerable) may have to be implemented for some time to recover acceptable levels of balance. Access to relevant learning, training and employment opportunities should not be the only criteria for determining the success of gender-responsive policy measures. Successful completion of learning opportunities and the initiation of sustainable career paths should be in focus too. A gender-transformative perspective<sup>53</sup> involves even longer-term strategic action towards the transformation of social structures and attitudes that shape gender.

Policies, strategies and programmes that address the NEET challenge can be found in the Key Features of Learning Cities (UIL, 2015). For NEETs, particular focus should be paid to the following areas identified in the framework: 2.1, ‘Promoting inclusive learning in the education system’ and 2.3, ‘Facilitating learning for and in the workplace’. Policies, strategies and programmes developed for NEETs should apply, above all, to key features 2.1.4, ‘Providing support for marginalized groups, including migrant families, to ensure access to education’; 2.3.4, ‘Providing appropriate learning opportunities for unemployed youth and adults’; and 3.3.3, ‘Adopting pro-poor funding policies and providing various types of support to disadvantaged groups’ (ibid., pp. 12–18).

With regard to governance arrangements and structures for policy-making, planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation, the city, municipal or local governments or authorities generally enjoy a certain degree of autonomy and responsibility. However, they are part of a system and hierarchy of governance that reaches from the local to the national level. The same is true for departments and specialized institutions – be they public, parastatal or non-governmental – with which the local authorities need to coordinate or collaborate in the design and implementation of youth-related policies. Furthermore, in the design of local poli-

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53 A gender-transformative approach means that promoting gender equality – the shared control of resources and decision-making – and women’s empowerment are central to an intervention.

cies, strategies, plans and programmes, city authorities usually operate within the framework of national – or even international – legislations, policies and plans as well as nationwide initiatives, programmes and actions.

In the broadest sense, urban policy and planning with regard to the inclusion of youth-related learning, training and development activities should be guided by global development agendas, conventions and agreements (e.g. the SDGs),<sup>54</sup> as well as by relevant national policies, legislation and development plans. Some United Nations organizations, such as UN-Habitat, have also developed normative frameworks and tools that were adopted by city governments (UN-Habitat, 2018).<sup>55</sup> Another example of global policies shaping local strategies is the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, which promotes decent work for young women and men engaged in the informal economy with an aim to facilitate a positive transition to formal work (ILO 2015, quoted in ILO, 2017, pp. 87).

Urban policy may also be affected by regional policies and plans such as the Youth Guarantee<sup>56</sup> proposed in 2013 by the European Council. This regional framework consists of a set of coordinated policies for youth to offer education, training or employment to all young people aged 15 to 24 within four months of becoming unemployed. Since its implementation in EU member states, the share of 15- to 24-year-olds not in employment, education or training has fallen from 13.2 per cent in 2012 to 10.3 per cent in 2018.<sup>57</sup> Another example is the *Regional Framework of Joint Strategic Actions for Young People 2016–2017 in the Arab States and*

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54 Please refer to the introduction to this chapter.

55 In 2018, UN-Habitat produced a number of normative tools to encourage cities to adopt policies and programmes that enhance employment, livelihoods and opportunities, with a focus on urban youth and women. These include the Youth 2030: The UN Youth Strategy; Youth as Agents of Peace: Somalia; State of Women and Youth in Saudi Cities; Refugee Youth: Good Practices in Urban Resettlement Contexts; Capacity Building in Support of Young Refugees in Metropolitans; and the Youth and the Blue Economy Declaration. By the end of 2018, a total of 61 cities had adopted urban policies and programmes promoting increased employment, livelihoods and opportunities with focus on urban youth and women (UN-Habitat, 2018, p. 37).

56 Reducing the number of NEETs is one of the explicit objectives of the Youth Guarantee, a 2013 EU initiative that aims to ensure that all young people aged 15–24 receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, and apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education (Eurofound, 2021; Mascherini, 2017, p. 30).

57 See <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079&langId=en> [Accessed 2 September 2021].

*Middle East and North Africa Region* (UN IATTTYP, 2016). Fourteen United Nations agencies<sup>58</sup> participated in the development of this framework to establish a common agenda and a collectively agreed-upon compilation of key strategic priorities and actions responding to the needs of young people in the region. NEETs at high risk of drifting into long-term unemployment and exclusion are also one of the three priority groups for The OECD Action Plan for Youth (OECD, 2013).

In the design of local policies, strategies, plans and programmes, city authorities must also take into account existing (enabling or hampering) factors such as the institutional capacity to deliver services, availability of resources, partnerships, networks, individual capacity, professional knowledge, and management capacity of the relevant institutions and involved personnel, among others. In implementing policies, strategies, plans and programmes, different stakeholders have a fundamental role to play. Multi-stakeholder partnerships among actors at all levels and coordinated actions are critical for addressing the NEET challenge effectively. Government, education and training providers, public and private employment services, youth organizations and the private sector can each contribute to the design and implementation of the different policy measures. The city government is in a privileged position to moderate, coordinate and steer related efforts.

Municipalities' competence and responsibility for the active inclusion of young people differs from country to country. Some municipalities have clear responsibilities, as national laws give them the power and the duty to offer support to and follow-up with young people moving from education into the labour market. In other countries, the responsibility for youth policy lies with higher levels

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58 The 14 UN agencies are the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA); ILO; the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS); the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); UN-Habitat; the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); UN Volunteers; UN Women; and the World Health Organization (WHO).

of government, such as the national or regional (sub-national) level. In any case, neither can a city authority act in isolation from nationwide governance structures, nor can a national government implement nationwide policies without relying on local structures, as the analysed examples in the following sections show.

### Examining the ways in which educational and training needs of youth at risk are identified and monitored

National policies require a strategic and integrated approach to mitigate the NEET situation, taking into account the educational and training needs of all the subgroups within the NEET category. To develop evidence-based policy measures, policies must (1) identify excluded groups of young people; (2) recognize which stage of exclusion from education, training or employment they have reached and which factors have influenced this situation of exclusion; (3) determine their specific education and training needs; and then (4) intervene with the most effective type of support. Analysing existing information and tackling relevant information gaps should therefore be the first step in understanding the nature and extent of the challenge and in developing appropriate and targeted policy interventions. Gender assessment and gender-sensitive monitoring is increasingly becoming a standard approach in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (WECF, 2018).

The NEET concept has been criticized for its inability to capture the heterogeneity of the population with such a status. While all NEETs share a common feature – i.e. they are all young people not in employment, education or training – the various subgroups within this category have very different characteristics and needs. This has important consequences for policy responses. A recent report by Eurofound (2021) suggests disaggregating the NEET population into seven subgroups<sup>59</sup>. This has led in the policy debate to the integration of subgroups that are particularly at risk of being

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<sup>59</sup> The sub-groups suggested are (1) re-entrants, (2) short-term unemployed, (3) long-term unemployed, (4) unavailable due to illness or disability, (5) unavailable due to family responsibilities, (6) discouraged workers, and (7) 'other' (Eurofound, 2021).



invisible and marginalized under the traditional ‘inactive’ category, such as young mothers or women with family responsibilities and young people with disabilities (ibid.).

Barford and Coombe (2019) argue that such NEET categories (i.e. ‘inactive’) potentially belie vast amounts of domestic and unpaid work. For example, globally, the total time spent doing unpaid care work equates to 2 billion people working 8 hours a day for free, and women complete over three times more of this work than men do.<sup>60</sup> Women’s unpaid work correlates with lower workforce participation, which might in part explain why double the proportion of women (16%), compared to men (8%), are NEETs in developing countries.<sup>61</sup> The social necessity and economic value of unpaid work are part of the broader explanation of how young people are getting by. In the absence of formal employment opportunities, informal work predominates in many lower income countries – which raises the question, What counts as work anyway? In the Global South, survey results on what young people aspire to show a preference for self-employment. This seems to reflect a desire to minimize risk in an insecure employment environment (ibid.).

The risk factors associated with becoming a NEET were the subject of a longitudinal study made in Scotland (The Scottish Government, 2015), which found ‘educational qualification’ to be the highest determinant of affecting youth at risk. Other school factors are also important, including time absent from school and number of exclusions. Two factors were found to be particularly significant for female youth: being an unpaid carer for more than 20 hours per week and pregnancy. The local NEET rate is an important factor for both cohorts and genders, with the risk of NEET status increasing in tandem with the local NEET rate. This effect may work through more than one mechanism: fewer available opportunities, demotivated young people, a local culture where being a NEET is the social norm, and areas more affected by the loss of local employment opportunities (ibid.).

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60 Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work (ILO, 2018), quoted in Barford and Coombe, 2019, p. 23.

61 Atlas of Sustainable Development Goals 2020. [online] Washington D.C., World Bank Group. Available at: <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/sdgoalatlas/> [Accessed 6 September 2021].

In the context of the European Union, for example, six risk factors were identified to increase the probability of young people becoming NEETs: (1) low education, (2) residency in remote areas, (3) disability, (4) immigration background, (5) difficult family environment, and (6) low household income (Eurofound, 2012). In Latin America, most of those classified as NEETs are engaged in tasks that are valued in their context. Here, access to education, average years of schooling, socio-economic level, early parenthood and family environment are some of the main factors influencing youth decisions on whether to study, work or combine both (Novella, 2018). The typical Latin American 'nini'<sup>62</sup> is a woman with incomplete secondary education who lives in an urban household in the bottom 40 per cent of the income distribution. Women account for two-thirds of the region's nini population, and among this group the single most important risk factor associated with their condition is marriage before age 18, compounded by teenage pregnancy (Hoyos, Rogers and Székely, 2016).

Worldwide, three out of four young people work in informal jobs (ILO, 2017). The results of a recent research study (Novella et al., 2018) in nine Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries<sup>63</sup> reveal that many of the approximately 20 million NEETs in the region engage in productive activities: 31 per cent of young people in this group (aged 15 to 24) are looking for work (especially males), 64 per cent (mainly women) are responsible for caring for family members, and almost all of them engage in domestic tasks or help in family businesses.<sup>64</sup> These young people therefore appear to be misclassified as NEETs, as many of them do indeed participate in the workforce. Only 3 per cent of them do not engage in any of these tasks and have no disability that prevents them from studying or working. The rates are higher, however, in Brazil and Chile,

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62 In Spanish-speaking Latin American countries, youth who are neither working nor in school are often labelled 'ninis', from the Spanish phrase 'ni estudia ni trabaja' ('not in study nor work'); Brazilians apply the term 'nem-nem' from the Portuguese 'nem estuda, nem trabalha' (Hoyos, Rogers and Székely, 2016, p. 1).

63 Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Haiti, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay

64 The survey showed that 41 per cent of youth in the region are enrolled exclusively in education or training, 21 per cent work, 17 per cent combine both activities, and the remaining 21 per cent (approx. 20 million) belong to the NEET group (Novella et al., 2018, p. 2)

where measures of seemingly inactive youth hover around 10 per cent (Novella et al., 2018a).

The qualitative analysis of the research study in the nine LAC countries shows that NEETs are those who most identify violence and insecurity as problems for their countries and drugs as a constant easy-money trap that draws them away from achieving their educational and work aspirations. In this sense, being a NEET might also be a strategy for avoiding the risks they might face on the street, as NEETs are mostly confined to the domestic sphere in their daily activities. In all analysed LAC countries, young people outside the education system and the workforce are more likely to enter parenthood at a younger age (Novella et al., 2018a).

In global terms, the share of NEETs is nowhere higher than in the Middle East and North Africa, a problem that especially concerns young women (OECD, 2016). An analysis of a dataset of ethnographic fieldwork in five Arab countries<sup>65</sup> to better understand the dynamics of engagement among youth concludes that while there is an apparent disengagement in public political life, young people's agencies are geared towards the goals of livelihood, employment, attaining personal advancement (through education), and markers of social adulthood (marriage) (Onodera et al., 2018).

The Republic of Korea is an interesting case among OECD countries: the rising numbers of NEETs<sup>66</sup> are not a consequence of low education levels but are explained by analysts as the result of a higher rate of university matriculation than in other countries, along with a growing number of irregular positions and other jobs with poor labour conditions that are reducing young people's motivation to work. With jobseekers' high level of education making them 'pickier' about jobs, and job growth concentrating on irregular jobs, it is increasingly common for young people to give up the 'job hunt' altogether. In addition, a substantial percentage of NEETs have left the workforce because of dissatisfaction with working conditions

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65 Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia

66 The Republic of Korea has the third-highest percentage (15.6 per cent) of NEETs among the OECD's 33 member countries (after Turkey with 24.9 per cent and Mexico with 18.5 per cent), as data from 2013 show (ILO, 2016).

(Hankyoreh, 2015). This supports identification of the trend that ‘unemployment [...] is only the tip of the iceberg; the quality of employment available to young people is increasingly an issue of concern’ (O’Higgins, quoted in Barford and Coombe, 2019, p. 45).

Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of NEET policy measures and determining their efficacy is crucial and constitutes an essential input for policy decisions and the planning process. This is particularly important in contexts in which available resources are scarce, and should go beyond mere data collection. Though rigorous evidence is not a silver bullet, Busso et al. (2017, p. 99) make a strong case for evidence-based policy and programming. They claim that governments throughout LAC countries have been investing ever-increasing sums to promote skills development, as they are aware of its importance for improving productivity and well-being. Unfortunately, the results of related interventions have often been disappointing, as policy-makers have essentially been ‘shooting in the dark’, committing precious resources to programmes that sound good on paper but have not been proven in practice. Using evidence as the basis for decision-making would help policy-makers see the policy pathway ahead more clearly (ibid.).

There are regional and international databases (e.g. OECD<sup>67</sup> and Eurostat<sup>68</sup>) that shed some light on the NEET phenomenon and are based on information provided by national governments. The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has created a specific publicly accessible and regularly updated NEET database with an estimate of the number and proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in each local authority for the years 2012 to 2017.<sup>69</sup> However, Maguire (2015), who analysed the UK NEET data in her research, highlights gaps in knowledge and understanding of the size, characteristics and geographical distribution of young people in the NEET group

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67 <https://data.oecd.org/youthinac/youth-not-in-employment-education-or-training-neet.htm> [Accessed 6 September 2021].

68 [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics\\_on\\_young\\_people\\_neither\\_in\\_employment\\_nor\\_in\\_education\\_or\\_training](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics_on_young_people_neither_in_employment_nor_in_education_or_training) [Accessed 6 September 2021].

69 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neet-data-by-local-authority-2012-16-to-18-year-olds-not-in-education-employment-or-training> [Accessed 6 September 2021].

in the UK; however, an example from Newcastle City Council illustrates that it is possible to do an in-depth analysis on the basis of existing data (see **Box 2**).

The value of targeting NEET services is providing a more tailor-made, individualized response that suits the needs of the young person more closely and is less costly than offering universal services in times of budget cuts. Critical for any locally based initiative is an impartial local assessment of the needs, experiences and outcomes of the targeted youth group at the earliest stage. This will ensure that programmes are not introduced based on assumptions, but rather on a clear understanding of where disadvantage lies and where ‘repair work’ is required.

#### **Box 2. Smarter targeting of NEET interventions**

The results of careful data analysis by the local council in Newcastle upon Tyne, northeast England, demonstrates the importance of evidence for smarter targeting of NEET interventions as well as for research-based guidance on how government, local authorities and front-line providers can prevent poor outcomes for young people. The analysis is (a) based on a rich, robust and large set of local data on young people; (b) uses a compelling, predictive and actionable approach to assessing risk factors; and (c) quantifies the depth and breadth of poor outcomes for certain groups of vulnerable youth (Social Finance, 2016). The analysis was conducted in four phases: (1) building the dataset (data integration); (2) identifying at-risk segments of the population (a snapshot analysis of education, employment and training); (3) testing proposed at-risk segments and further journey analyses (longitudinal education, employment and training); and (4) exploring vulnerable youths’ longer-term life chances (longer-term outcomes analysis) (*ibid.*).

Knowing that tailored, integrated, adaptive and flexible services are usually the most effective but also expensive, the Newcastle City Council was interested in an evidence-based understanding of who was most likely to become NEET and who to focus on for targeted prevention. They therefore analysed the city’s entire population of 17 to 19 year olds, drawing on historical and cur-

rent data from social services, education, employment, housing and homelessness, youth offending, mental health, crime and deprivation. This analysis has guided Newcastle City Council to focus its future interventions on risk factors with the strongest predictive power, namely (dysfunctional) family relationships. The council also decided to start related support measures earlier and create them more holistically (ibid.).

Given the high level of attention given to NEETs by international bodies, governments and policy-makers, there is a surprising lack of robust evaluation or research on programmes and policy effectiveness related to supporting them. Highlighting this lack of information, Eurofound (2015) called for more research; specifically, the documentation of qualitative approaches ‘to build up the evidence base on process-related aspects of delivery and experiences of progression along employability pathways’ (ibid., p. 56).

In addition to the lack of evidence on programme and policy impact or effectiveness, there is limited research on the most disadvantaged groups – such as persons with disabilities; ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities; refugees and migrants; internally displaced people; street children; inmates; and young people affected by HIV, other diseases and substance abuse – and their learning, training and development needs. Moreover, little research has been carried out concerning the underlying reasons that keep young people out of education, training and employment. As a consequence, the root causes of young people’s exclusion do not seem to be properly tackled by the measures implemented in many cases.

### **Examining urban policy, strategy, planning and implementation for youth-related learning, training and development activities**

The following examples of good practice use the conceptual framework (see ‘Conceptual framework on inclusion and lifelong learning in cities for youth at risk/NEETs’ on p. 73x) as the analyt-

ical lens and are structured – as far as possible – according to the five broad stages of the policy responses process for prevention-, reintegration- or compensation-oriented policies.<sup>70</sup> The examples often combine strategies.

#### *Measures to prevent early school leavers:*

##### *Prevention through early intervention*

While some city authorities establish support strategies to re-engage NEETs in the local labour market, others put their strategic emphasis on prevention through early interventions. This requires integrating national education policy instruments with local actions to prevent early school leaving and social exclusion. The strategies mainly target young people at risk of dropping out of education, but also unemployed young people who have dropped out of school. Low wealth ('poverty') is widely accepted as one of the key reasons for students to leave school early, especially in many low- and middle-income countries in the Global South.

School authorities must therefore be particularly alert in identifying those students with a low wealth background. Possible measures to increase retention can include free meals, textbooks and transport to school. Some students may lose interest in school due to poor academic achievement or may perceive their academic path as irrelevant for finding a job or, especially in the case of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), see training as a second option. Therefore, prevention policies should target adolescents within the secondary education system primarily (aged 15 to 18 years) and should address the root causes of their potential exclusion (Bardak, Maseda and Rosso, 2015).

Successful strategies to keep adolescents and youth in school involve tackling some of the root causes of early school abandonment. Reasons identified in Latin America, for example, include the high costs of school (monetary and non-monetary), uncertainty and lack of information on the lifelong benefits of schooling,

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<sup>70</sup> (1) Measures to prevent early school leaving; (2) measures to reintegrate early school leavers; (3) school-to-work transition policies; (4) measures to foster employability; (5) measures to remove practical and logistical barriers to employment.

and low motivation. Institutional and contextual factors also influence the decision to stay in school or not: parental education and preferences, the quality of education in the local schools, opportunities in the labour market, and the influence of peers.

In Central American countries, which have relatively high dropout rates at the lower secondary level, effective measures to prevent early school leaving include conditional cash transfers with information modules to inform students and their parents about the benefits of education. In South American countries and Mexico, which have relatively high dropout rates in upper secondary schools, a combination of early warning systems to identify youth at risk of dropping out with targeted socio-emotional measures and tutoring have been implemented. Some of the major findings on more effective interventions are summarized in Table 1, reflecting a review of existing evidence on their impact (Hoyos, Rogers and Székely, 2016).

**Table 1.** Effective interventions to prevent early school leavers in the context of Latin America

Demand-side interventions	Supply-side interventions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Financial incentives to remain in school, e.g. conditional cash transfers, need-based and deferred scholarships, merit scholarships and achievement-based financial incentives;</li> <li>2. Information interventions;</li> <li>3. School vouchers.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Socio-emotional interventions, e.g. early childhood development and cognitive-behavioural approaches;</li> <li>2. Pedagogical interventions, e.g. tutoring and personalized assistance, ICT and distance learning,<sup>71</sup> vocational and technical skills training;</li> <li>3. Early warning systems;</li> <li>4. School-based management;</li> <li>5. Extension of schooling.</li> </ol>

Source: Hoyos, Rogers and Székely (2016)

<sup>71</sup> Rigorous evaluations of distance learning and information and communications technology (ICT) interventions fail to show a positive impact on retention rates in secondary school. Similarly, the review found no conclusive evidence that TVET reduces dropout of marginal students (Hoyos, Rogers and Székely, 2016).



Strategies for keeping at-risk students in education yield the most promising results when they address barriers to educational participation at an early stage. Schools should monitor student attendance systematically and keep key stakeholders – notably parents and social services – informed to ensure that troubled pupils are detected and receive the attention they need. While the monitoring and reporting of attendance is standard during the years of compulsory school in most countries, such practice is less common in non-compulsory upper-secondary education. A good practice can be found in Sweden, where upper-secondary schools are legally bound to report early school leavers under 20 and students with high truancy (absenteeism) to the local authorities as part of their so-called ‘activity responsibility’. The municipalities then try to establish contact with the student, find out about their situation and offer them activities to help return to upper-secondary education.

The City of Rotterdam, Netherlands has a system to prevent absenteeism: truant officers act as intermediaries between students, parents and teachers, and can intervene from an early stage. In some EU cities (e.g. in Rotterdam; Roubaix, France, and Stockholm, Sweden), school dropouts can attend ‘second-chance’ schools. These are special schools in which early school leavers get a second chance to complete their secondary education by following a personalized study programme in line with their individual learning capacities (EC, 2011). A similar approach is applied by the local authority of Arroyomolinos, in Madrid, Spain, which has designed a transversal strategy to reduce the rates of school absenteeism, dropout and improve the academic outcomes of young people. (FMM, 2015). Similarly, in Melton, Australia, several initiatives and programmes to keep young people in school have been developed through the city’s Community Learning Board (CLB). These programmes, which include youth engagement projects and homework clubs, target indigenous young people and refugees in particular, as a disproportionate number of these groups disengage from schooling early (UIL and NILE, 2015).

Collaboration between schools and public employment services (PES) is often an important component of successful outreach and prevention strategies. In Japan, 'Hello Work' centres provide counselling, job-search assistance (e.g. interview training and preparation, seminars and student job fairs) and job placement to students in high schools and universities. It also informs schools of vacancies, offers regular on-site counselling in schools and supports school career guidance counsellors. The collaboration between schools and the PES has been extremely successful: virtually all Japanese students who choose not to pursue tertiary education and would like to work have a job offer upon graduating from high school (OECD, 2016).

One other measure that appears to be particularly effective – not in secondary school but long before children reach that level – is early childhood development (ECD). Early intervention fosters later learning and attachment to the education system, particularly for disadvantaged children (Kautz et al., 2014), as well as on-time school enrolment, crime reduction, increase of workforce productivity and teen pregnancy reduction (Currie and Almond, 2011). There is also evidence of such positive outcomes of intergenerational approaches to learning, such as community-based family learning programmes with a focus on school preparedness and a strengthened learning culture in families (UIL, 2017a).

#### *Measures to reintegrate early school leavers*

Reintegration or (re-)engagement policies include all measures aimed at helping young people re-enter the educational sys-

'Early intervention fosters later learning and attachment to the education system, particularly for disadvantaged children.'

tem or facilitating their entry into the labour market. Measures that favour re-entry into educational pathways include tracking services to identify, support and monitor young people; creating second-chance education opportunities; and the recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of informal and non-formal learning. While there is an array of formal and non-formal second-chance education and learning opportunities (read case study examples from around the world on the UNESCO Literacy and Numeracy Practices Database (LitBase)<sup>72</sup> (UIL, 2017b; UIL and NILE, 2015), which are often equivalent to formal primary and secondary education (in particular in the LAC region), there are fewer opportunities to validate informal learning at the lower education and training levels (UIL, 2018).

In Medellín, Colombia, the municipal administration runs a programme called *En el Colegio Contamos con Vos* ('In the school, we count on you'), which visits out-of-school children and youth during door-to-door tours in the neighbourhoods that have the highest dropout rates. This programme has enabled the return of almost 8,000 children and youth to the school system from 2016 to the end of January of 2019.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, in Sweden, local municipalities establish contact with early school leavers under the age of 20 to persuade them to return to upper secondary school. However, a challenge for follow-up services is that information on students' reasons for leaving school early is often unavailable. They may therefore spend much of their time chasing students who merely failed to de-register with their municipality when moving to a different city and who do not require any support (OECD, 2016).

A very promising, though costly, approach is to explicitly devolve outreach to a single actor who screens all young people to detect those at risk of disengagement. This is the case, for example, in Norway, where county-level follow-up services are responsible for contacting all under-21 year olds who leave school (with or

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72 Visit <http://uil.unesco.org/literacy/effective-practices-database-litbase> [Accessed 7 September 2021].

73 See <https://especiales.semana.com/regionales/medellin/contamos-con-vos-iniciativa-en-medellin.html> [Accessed 7 September 2021].

without a qualification) to assess their activity status. Trackable students and those who are not in education nor employment are either offered counselling or training, or they are put in touch with social support services or the local employment office (ibid.).

Meanwhile, in Cork, Ireland, the Cork Education and Training Board (CETB), which is funded by the Irish Government and forms a part of Cork's lifelong learning activities, runs the Youthreach Education programme for early school leavers (UIL and NILE, 2015) (see **Box 3**).

**Box 3. Youthreach: Re-engaging early school leavers in Cork, Ireland**

Youthreach is a joint programme between the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in Ireland. It is intended to help young people return to learning and prepare for employment and adult life. It also provides them with opportunities to get certified qualifications. The programme is aimed at unemployed early school leavers aged 15 to 21, is generally full-time, and lasts from one to two years. It covers basic education, personal development, vocational training and work experience. Opportunities to improve literacy and numeracy are also available at all 12 Youthreach centres throughout Cork.

To be eligible for a Youthreach programme provided by the CETB, candidates must be between 15 and 21 years of age, unemployed, an early school leaver without any vocational training, and should have not attempted the Leaving Certificate.<sup>74</sup> Courses are free, and trainees over 16 years of age receive a weekly allowance, a travel allowance if they have to travel 5 km or more to the Youthreach centre, and may also qualify for free childcare and a meal allowance. Participants leaving Youthreach can apply for a jobseeker's allowance.

*Source:* Citizens Information Board (2021)

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<sup>74</sup> The Leaving Certificate Examination is the final exam of the Irish secondary school system. See <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Senior-cycle/Curriculum/> [Accessed 7 September 2021].

In the City of Balanga, the Philippines, out-of-school youth are provided with training, education and mentorship opportunities through Project Duke, a public-private partnership programme. Over the course of 10 modules, participants develop the tools and skills to make strategic life choices that make them less likely to become involved in community problems such as crime and drug addiction (UIL and NILE, 2015).

The Education Model for Life and Work (Modelo Educación para la Vida y el Trabajo, MEVyT) in Mexico is an innovative model of basic education for youth and adult learners who missed out on formal education to catch up on primary and secondary education. The programme, implemented by the National Institute of Adult Education (INEA) in partnership with the States Adult Education Institutions (IEEAs), has a strong focus on topics related to the world of work. It allows learners to exercise great autonomy in their learning process in order to obtain officially recognized and accredited qualifications for Grades 6 and 9. While it does not exclusively target youth, special and tailor-made modules have been designed for disadvantaged groups such as indigenous, migrant, disabled, incarcerated and isolated rural populations.<sup>75</sup>

As opposed to programmes for youth at risk in the rest of Latin America, which tend to have a strong emphasis on work-based training, Brazil's youth policy is almost exclusively education-driven. This is also the case for the country's largest training programme, ProJovem, which prioritizes re-engagement with the education system and the acquisition of basic education qualifications (see **Box 4**). The Brazilian Government aims to provide a comprehensive approach (including training in ICT, communication and life skills, as well as community action and jobs search) with a particular focus on the achievement of basic and secondary school education (including, in some cases, vocational qualification courses). The various programmes – ProJovem Adolescente, ProJovem Urbano, ProJovem Campo and

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<sup>75</sup> See <https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/education-model-life-and-work-mexico> [Accessed 7 September 2021].

ProJovem Trabalhador – are combined under the umbrella of ProJovem Integrado (ECLAC, 2021).<sup>76</sup>

**Box 4. ProJovem Urbano: Re-engaging youth in learning in Brazilian cities**

ProJovem Urbano is a national programme run by the Brazilian Ministry of Education and targets urban youths between 18 and 29 years of age who have not completed basic education. The programme lasts 18 months (2,000 study hours) and has three components: (1) completion of basic education through the Youth and Adult Education programme; (2) vocational training; and (3) citizenship education. Participants receive a monthly stipend which is contingent on 75 per cent attendance at programme activities and the timely submission of coursework. The programme launched in 2006 in all 27 federal state capital cities of Brazil and was then rolled out in metropolitan areas with more than 200,000 inhabitants in its second year.

Sources: Viero Schmidt et al. (2011); OECD (2014)

*School-to-work transition policies: Reintegration through youth employment policy interventions*

Support for the transition from school to work is provided in many countries through active labour market programmes, which are mainly delivered by public employment services (PES) operating at the local level. Such services include job search assistance, counselling and placement services, labour market training and retraining, employment subsidies (hiring incentives for the private sector), self-employment and entrepreneurship support, and public works and community services. Specific training programmes can be combined with work experience opportunities, including internships, traineeships, public works and incentives for employers. Many countries have started to take a holistic approach to providing integrated services tailored to the different needs of young people through a single agency (Bardak, Maseda and Rosso, 2015).

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<sup>76</sup> ProJovem is also implemented in Peru (Diaz and Rosas, 2016).

Research conducted by the European Commission (EC, 2015)<sup>77</sup> analysed the ways in which outreach work of PES is delivered in European countries. Outreach may be delivered at a separate site – for example, a one-stop shop or youth centre (a ‘satellite model’) – or, alternatively, it could be delivered through mobile and community services and street work (a ‘detached model’). Internet, social media and smartphone services are also used increasingly to raise the profile of and offer online models of outreach. During the EC’s research, however, no clear trend of PES involvement in these different models of delivery could be identified (ibid.).

Overall, few PES are involved as primary provider of outreach with longer-term financial backing. Most of the PES-led outreach activities are time-bound. PES use partnerships to bolster their capacity, reach, skills and offers to NEETs. Working with trained outreach workers or with youth and community organizations linked to the target groups appears to contribute to a successful strategy. Mobile outreach and street work breaks down barriers and perceptions NEETs may have of PES effectively, builds mutual trust, and starts the process of (re)engagement. However, no one strategy should stand alone (ibid.). An example of community-based outreach work is the ‘one-stop shop’ approach in two communities in Costa Rica, which is part of a strategy to raise the profile of youth employment services (see **Box 5**).

**Box 5. ‘One-stop shops’ for youth employment in two communities in Costa Rica**

An initiative promoting ‘one-stop shops’ to stimulate youth employment was implemented in two communities in Costa Rica, Desamparados and Upala. The programme targeted young people aged 15 to 35 in vulnerable situations, with a particular focus on women. It was designed to address the following challenges faced by young Costa Ricans looking for work: (1) lack of structured information on education and work opportuni-

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<sup>77</sup> The research report was produced based on 28 descriptions of practices on outreach and activation of NEETs, submitted in October 2014 by 25 PES in 23 countries (EC, 2015, p. 2).

ties, (2) insufficient education and training, and (3) weak public policies on unemployment. A two-pronged strategy was used, featuring implementation of an integrated service model for youth and the strengthening of institutional capacities to address youth unemployment.

Three one-stop shops were set up, two in Desamparados and one in Upala, establishing an information system on job availability and employment services and providing information on the situation for young people. Next, a programme that aligned with the national policy on entrepreneurship, *Costa Rica Empreneude*, and provided business development training was established, during which 994 young people from Desamparados and Upala developed their business plans using the methodology of the *Colectivo Integral de Desarrollo* and set up over 50 businesses. In addition, 129 young people received finance for their enterprises. Meanwhile, 89 local tutors were given business plan development training.

A key factor to ensure the sustainability of these interventions is the ownership of the Integrated Service Model by the Ministry for Work and Social Security. This model was replicated in ten municipalities (16 one-stop shops) under the framework of the national youth employment strategy EMPLATE<sup>78</sup>. Using this strategy, some 6,000 young people benefited from work orientation and employment intermediary services. In total, 39 strategic partnership agreements were signed with the private sector to determine market needs and include young people in their selection processes.

One of the lessons learnt was that planning processes must involve all participating stakeholders. Local governments were not involved as priority partners when the programme was set up, which led to difficulties in incorporating their needs, responsibilities and ability to respond. Ownership and the leadership capabilities of local stakeholders must be fostered, since these are the people who will drive the project's progress. Local governments have developed their own processes to integrate the one-stop shops into their own structure and municipal budget.

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78 Costa Rica. Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social (2011)



It is important to ensure that the concept of one-stop shop is fully integrated into the planning, organic structure and regular municipal budget on a permanent basis.

*Source: SDG Fund (2017)*

### *Measures to foster employability*

A number of programmes aim to enhance young people's employability and productivity through *technical* and *vocational education* and training (TVET) or by providing work experience. For example, in Ghana, the Youth Inclusive Entrepreneurial Development Initiative for Employment (YIEDIE), a private sector programme, operates in the cities of Accra and Takoradi. Sessions take place at the weekend (16 training sessions over eight weeks), and targets youth aged 15 to 35 who want to build their soft skills to increase their employability. In Takoradi, the local government supports the programme, which includes components of skills and development training, entrepreneurial training and apprenticeships. Each year, around 1,600 young people enrol in the programme, which is funded by the MasterCard Foundation's Youth Forward Initiative. Participants also pay attendance fees (Babongte Avura and Ulzen-Appiah, 2016).

The Republic of Korea's youth employment policy interventions have focused on ensuring a better match between labour supply and demand, strengthening technical vocational education and training, stimulating enterprise development and improving the gathering of labour market information. Increasing the employability of young people is a main objective of government policy, and this is achieved with enterprise start-ups and the promotion of a work-and-learn system targeting 10,000 enterprises, among other initiatives. In terms of positive action, the country's Special Act on the Promotion of Youth Employment encourages public institutions to take on three unemployed youth out of every 100 new hires each year (ILO, 2016).

Many countries are placing increased emphasis on early intervention to avoid young people slipping into a NEET situation. The EU's Youth Guarantee calls on its member states to ensure that every young person under the age of 25 receives an offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed (EC, 2015, pp. 11–12). It is worth keeping in mind, however, that a major limitation of public employment services and active labour market programmes is that they tend to be directed towards the 'registered unemployed' and exclude other NEET groups such as the 'inactive', the discouraged and family carers. This means that large numbers of vulnerable youth, particularly young women who are not actively looking for a job and not registered with the employment services, do not benefit from such policy measures (Bardak, Maseda and Rosso, 2015).

A good example of engaging businesses to help address the NEET challenge comes from the Leeds City Region<sup>79</sup> in the UK. There, the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has developed an integrated package of measures to increase youth employment. The ambition of this campaign is to 'secure a "NEET-free" city region', with more and better jobs, and the skilled and flexible workforce to sustain them (URBACT, 2015, p. 10). An overarching employer engagement campaign ('five three one') and a complementary suite of linked activities are embedded within the overall strategic economic plan (URBACT, 2015).

Some of the other activities of the LEP's NEET-free campaign include:

- Headstart, which provides 'wraparound' support to both individuals and employers for six months, including interview guarantees, in-work mentoring, and a wage incentive for employers.
- The Apprenticeship Hub and Training Agency offers free, independent and coordinated apprenticeship advice and support. The Apprenticeship Training Agency was established to target SMEs who

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<sup>79</sup> The Leeds City Region refers to the local authority districts of Barnsley, Bradford, Calderdale, Craven, Harrogate, Kirklees, Leeds, Selby, Wakefield and York.

were not ‘apprenticeship ready’; to date, it has developed 2,500 apprenticeships and provides incentives to SMEs.

- A devolved youth contract focuses on ‘hidden’ NEETs aged 16 to 17 who are at risk of exclusion. Local community groups aided by grants identify and engage these young people in the labour market.
- And, finally, Talent Match Leeds engages community sector and voluntary partners, including youth ambassadors, to provide services to long-term unemployed young people who face multiple barriers to work (URBACT, 2015, p. 6).

Another key success element of the Leeds City Region initiative is its agenda and governance arrangements, both of which put employers at the forefront in terms of their needs and responsibilities. Employer engagement involves participating in strategy/programme designs and oversight of effective delivery. In this way, they become partners rather than recipients of the outputs from public policies and programmes in which they were not involved. The Leeds City Region has also faced challenges, however, including time-consuming negotiations and employer-relationship building, time-limited activities, and a lack of a detailed information on NEET characteristics and evolving job opportunities, among others (URBANACT, 2015).

Some of the lessons learned from these experiences may be transferable to other cities; they include:

- a) Recognizing the value in bringing public agencies and employers together to devise strategy and priorities as well as to build commitment, common purpose and sustainability;
- b) Prioritizing employer leadership and providing a strong ‘demand-side’ orientation where growth and jobs are closely linked;
- c) Paying particular attention to smaller firms – such as the emphasis on SMEs in the ‘five three one’ campaign – which may be resource-intensive but reaps a range of benefits;
- d) Focusing on attitudes, information, relationships and behaviour, which can be as important as precise policies and actions;
- e) Adopting a strategic, long-term approach to governance, engagement and mutual understanding, which matters as much as resources;

- f) The importance of forming a strong evidence base to inform the diagnosis of the problem and potential solutions, but also to monitor progress;
- g) Making the case for action to the business community (as well as to governments and other stakeholders), as it is they who ultimately employ young people and it is their decisions that determine collectively whether more and better jobs become available to young people (ibid.).

Meanwhile, in Glasgow, Scotland, the employability model, embedded in the country's NEET strategy (Scottish Executive, 2006), constitutes another integrated and comprehensive city-level initiative to tackle the NEET challenge (OECD, 2013, pp. 39–52). In response to the government strategy, the City of Glasgow established its own Youth Employment Partnership strategy, chaired by the local authority and involving key stakeholders, including all relevant local authority departments, Skills Development Scotland, further education colleges, the National Health Service, the Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector (GCVS) and the Glasgow Housing Association (GHA). The key operational components of implementation for the strategy were: data sharing, early identification, provision (including strengthening the outreach model and mobilization of the NGO sector), transition and progression, employer engagement, aftercare, and monitoring and evaluation (OECD, 2013). This experience provided the city with key lessons, including the:

- importance of clear leadership and direction;
- value of establishing a shared set of targets and assigning responsibility for delivery;
- need for exemplary intelligence relating to clients and data sharing agreements between key partners;
- effectiveness of early-intervention systems to identify young people with additional support needs;
- importance of engaging effectively with employers – particularly through respected business leaders, iconic city brands and high-profile events;
- value of investing in cross-cultural working to shape behaviours across policy areas such as education, employment, health/care, justice and housing (ibid., p. 51).

### *Measures to remove practical and logistical barriers*

Measures to remove barriers, the final stage in the process, are for those in need of special support addressing specific disadvantages and vulnerabilities. This includes young women, adolescent mothers, young people with learning and physical disabilities, indigenous young people and those from ethnic minorities, and young people who require highly personalized mentoring and coaching to reengage and stay in learning, training and work.

The BladeRunners model of the City of Vancouver, British Columbia, is considered one of the most successful programmes in Canada to support disadvantaged youth transition to employment (OECD, 2013). BladeRunners was conceived in 1994 and a unique system of 24/7 support<sup>80</sup> was subsequently developed. Since then, the programme has expanded to more than 20 other communities in British Columbia. The original Vancouver site offers skills building and recognition, job retention and progression, and work-based learning to disadvantaged youth aged 15 to 30 years. The aim of the programme is to promote skills and work experience that foster long-term attachment to the labour force and the social integration of young people with multiple barriers. The programme instruments include an initial assessment, training, placement on construction sites and support from programme coordinators, which is a key defining feature of the model.

Moreover, BladeRunners has a strong partnership element, and its transition to a public-private partnership approach in 2003 has further increased the importance of private sector (construction and other industries) support, which is vital to the success of the programme (ibid.).

Although several success factors of the BladeRunners programme can be identified, including (1) the building of multi-sector partnerships; (2) the local delivery of programming and short-term training tailored to participants' needs and abilities; (3) person-

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80 Support is offered whenever programme participants need it, on or off the job. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. BladeRunners participants all have the mobile phone number of 'their' co-ordinator who can be reached at all times (OECD, 2013, p. 29).

alized and comprehensive support; (4) a well-developed and extensive portfolio of employers; and (5) a network of community activists keeping an interested eye on programme development, a number of challenges can be found as well, and should be taken into consideration when implementing the programme in other contexts. For example:

- securing sustainable funding is viewed as one of the most significant challenges;
- maintaining dedication to the original model places high expectations on the programme coordinators;
- the need to continuously adapt to local labour market developments;
- ensuring a better gender balance (OECD, 2015).

Based on the good practice examples from Glasgow and Vancouver, and case studies from other countries,<sup>81</sup> the OECD suggests the following tools and approaches to address the NEET challenge at the local level:

- Investing in the earliest levels of education;
- Preventing school dropout;
- Personalized support to help youth progress into employment or training;
- Recognizing the value of informal and non-formal learning;
- Raising young people's aspirations (OECD, 2013, p. 9).

For young women facing gender- and youth-based barriers simultaneously, the pathways out of NEET status can be even more of a challenge. To address this, the OECD suggests governments undertake a systematic review of legislation to eliminate all forms of discrimination, in particular those affecting young women; to eliminate the provisions in workplace regulations that discourage young women to apply for jobs; to integrate the demands of young women in national youth strategies and gender-equality strategies; to gather sex- and age-disaggregated data sets to promote better informed policy decisions; and to increase the opportunities for young women and women associations to participate in all spheres of public life (OECD, 2016).

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<sup>81</sup> See OECD, 2015, pp. 12–14

A four-country study by the European Training Foundation (ETF)<sup>82</sup> shows that gender is the most significant factor in shaping the situation of the youth population: women make up 83 per cent of all NEETs in Egypt, 66 per cent in Palestine, 60 per cent in Georgia, and 55 per cent in Albania. Family care is the primary reason for young women becoming NEETs, although to a widely varying extent. The proportion of women who are 'inactive' due to family-care responsibilities in each country are over a quarter in Albania, two-thirds in Georgia, 70 per cent in Palestine and 80 per cent in Egypt. The risk of becoming a NEET increases significantly with age. The number of NEETs also increases dramatically between the ages of 25 and 29 in Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and Tunisia. This seems to be driven by the high proportion of women who drop out of the labour market after the age of 24 (generally linked with marriage). Interestingly, it is not a lack of education that prevents young women from finding a (paid) job; it is generally young, highly educated females who face unemployment or inactivity, while this is not the case for young, well-educated males (Bardak, Masada and Rosso, 2015).

Discouraging working conditions, fewer networking opportunities, lower levels of mobility, difficulties in engaging in entrepreneurship, restrictive social norms and public perception, coupled with the lack of affordable child and elderly care make it very hard for young women to work. Specific measures targeting NEET women and more general gender-sensitive – or even gender-transformative – policies continue to be very limited and are ad hoc in nature in many countries. However, some countries have promoted programmes to raise awareness of women's potential roles in the labour market.

Jordan, for example, has established employment programmes aimed at replacing foreign workers with local women, as well as offering wage subsidies and financial incentives to employers. In addition, some work–family reconciliation measures (e.g. part-time work, parental leave and remote work) have been adopted in

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82 Albania, Egypt, Georgia and Palestine

Armenia, Montenegro and the Russian Federation, while anti-harassment legislation has been adopted in Turkey. Public childcare facilities exist in some countries, for instance in Serbia, where the service is free of charge for poor households with costs growing progressively in relation to the family income (ibid.).

## Governance and implementation arrangements

City policies, strategies and plans that address youth development issues are usually embedded in a national policy or strategy (such as the employability model of the City of Glasgow) or are part of major national inclusion-oriented programmes. This is the case in Ireland, for example, where support measures for NEETs at the city level (e.g. City of Cork) are provided as part of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).<sup>83</sup> Successful governance arrangements manage to involve many actors and stakeholders; participatory approaches to planning and implementation of NEET policies and programmes strengthen relevance and ownership: the Cork City Partnership approach seems to be particularly effective in engaging the NEETs themselves in such processes (see **Box 6**).

### **Box 6. Cork City Partnership: Going the extra mile with NEETs**

The Cork City Partnership (CCP), one of five analysed case studies in a recent research project on programme implementers (PIs) working with NEETs in Ireland,<sup>84</sup> has been helping young people who are socially isolated or disadvantaged for over 20 years. Under SICAP (the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme), CCP offers a range of social inclusion services, programmes and support for NEETs, including pre-employment support, such as assistance with résumé writing, interview preparation and pre-apprenticeship opportunities; and accredited and unaccredited training courses, such as first-aid response, manual handling, point-of-sale training, computers and cosmetics. Other

83 SICAP is funded by the Irish Government and co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF), including a special allocation under the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI).

84 The five PIs analysed for the project are Cork City Partnership, South Tipperary Development Company Ltd, Donegal Local Development Company Ltd, Wexford Local Development, and Laois Partnership Company (Gardner et al., 2017, Appendix 1).



services include self-employment and start-your-own-business support and the 'Explore' programme, a pre-employment job sampling programme that helps young people become familiar with the workplace and understand their options. Alongside these programmes, CCP offers a range of one-to-one supports, including assessment and mentoring, which aim to meet the individual needs of each young person.

Involving NEETs in the planning and development of the SICAP programme was particularly effective in CCP's approach. The same applies to the approaches for engaging NEETs, as CCP considers families and peers to be key referral agents for NEETs. Work with local businesses to tailor training to local employment opportunities was identified as another feature of CCP's successful implementation. CCP works with NEETs by aligning their non-accredited training directly with the workforce requirements of local businesses and employers. Working with NEETs at their level and supporting them to resolve personal issues so they can progress into work and education, along with going the extra mile to follow up with NEETs, also made the CCP's approach particularly effective.

*Source:* Gardner et al. (2017, Appendix, pp. 71–74)

Governance arrangements of local NEET initiatives and strategies are to a large extent cross-sectoral, involving several departments and institutions. Effective coordination mechanisms are therefore essential. The creation of multi-sector partnerships is a crucial element of many programmes, such as the BladeRunner programme in Vancouver, which also embraced a public-private partnership (PPP) approach. The European Youth Guarantee<sup>85</sup> has also been categorized as a PPP and, accordingly, EU member states have put in place new governance structures to overcome the fragmentation of responsibilities on youth policies and to enhance a partnership approach (Mascherini, 2017). The Irish Ballymun Youth Guarantee Pilot Project (EC, 2016), for instance, owes part of its success to bringing together, in an effective way, a broad range of different stakeholders (i.e. public employment services, employers

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<sup>85</sup> See Footnote 58.

and trade union representatives, education and training providers, local government, local development and youth organizations) in delivering the Youth Guarantee (Mascherini, 2017).

Coordination, collaboration and partnerships are crucial to successful implementation of NEET policies, strategies and programmes. National youth-related policies, strategies and development plans usually also define the mandate and collaborative responsibilities of municipalities or city governments (and other institutions) concerning youth development.

Managing collaborative work that brings together a large number of actors can be difficult, however (OECD, 2015). Responsibilities for youth policies are typically spread across a range of branch ministries, while policy implementation may be located at different tiers of government (local, regional and national). As a result, policies are often poorly coordinated and cross-communication is found wanting. Common databases with client information accessible to all government services at all levels can help. They are often unavailable, however, due to privacy concerns or for political reasons. Information must therefore be shared ad hoc, on a case-by-case basis, and often requires the explicit consent of the young person concerned or of their parents (OECD, 2016).

Effective institutional structures can contribute greatly to rapid information exchange and close cooperation between actors. The Australian Government responded to the need to better coordinate support policies for young people by placing so-called 'partnership brokers' into over a hundred regions. The partnership brokers were commissioned to facilitate and strengthen local connections between schools, businesses, community groups and families to promote educational attainment, social participation and successful school-to-work transitions of young people. Some of their main tasks were, depending on the local circumstances, to help disadvantaged young people access and navigate local support systems, to improve the collaboration of various actors involved in delivering youth support services, and to identify and help bridge gaps in service delivery (ibid.).

'Coordination, collaboration and partnerships are crucial to successful implementation of NEET policies, strategies and programmes.'

In South Africa, the mandate for youth development is established through *The White Paper on Developmental Local Government* (Republic of South Africa, 1998), the *Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000* (Republic of South Africa, 2000) and the *Draft Integrated Youth Development Strategy for South Africa* (Republic of South Africa, 2011). At the local level – namely, Johannesburg, Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality and the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality – policy and strategy documents were developed through intensive youth and stakeholder consultations, research and benchmarking processes. They stipulate key priority areas on which the different units (departments) of the municipal governments act (Buntu and Lehmann, 2015).

However, when the South African Cities Network (SACN) and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) analysed these local strategies, they found a common deficit: the commitments to concretize the policies by developing implementation plans were not met. Moreover, the policies were not even known in detail by senior managers at the city governments. The analysis concluded that the actual level of implementation of the policy commitments was not convincing – in fact, Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality and the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality still do not have a functioning youth unit or dedicated youth coordinator and the youth councils in Johannesburg and Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality no longer exist. The authors also showed concern that local policy documents were not easily accessible to youth or the general public (ibid.).

The study also included a SWOT analysis<sup>86</sup> for each municipality, which found that – despite the existence of policies – there were challenges with implementation. Although there were some attempts to formalize cooperation on youth issues across sectors, there was a general tendency of overlapping mandates, duplication of structures, information deficits and unsystematic engagement of non-state sectors. The study further revealed that

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86 SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis is a framework used to develop strategic planning. See <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/swot.asp> [Accessed 8 September 2021].

the institutional capacities to provide youth programmes were challenged by unclear objectives, lack of targets, narrow focus and insufficient capacitation. Lacking documentation, monitoring and evaluation of youth programmes was identified as a major weakness and made objective assessment of the cities' performance in youth development nearly impossible. Lastly, in relation to individual capacities, it was found that, despite the impressive work performed by dedicated youth representatives, their role was often undermined. The need for professionalization, awareness and training on youth matters on all levels was clearly articulated (*ibid.*).

Looking at the European context, the Eurocities Cities for Active Inclusion (EUROCITIES–CfAI) network analysed the different institutional arrangements of its members<sup>87</sup> and concluded that all cities play an important role in ensuring that young people's needs are addressed by local social services. In their reports, the cities outlined several successful and promising approaches for the active inclusion of young people, which are largely based on integrated working methods and a personalized approach to specific target groups. These approaches focused primarily on (a) prevention and early intervention; (b) empowerment and a bottom-up approach; (c) the offer of personalized services; (d) coordination and partnerships, including coordination between municipal departments and other public agencies, partnerships with the third sector and involvement of local businesses; and (e) promoting entrepreneurship through education and financial assistance (EC, 2011, p. 7).

A review of formal policy responses to systemic youth issues from various jurisdictions in Canada and internationally (Jeffrey, 2008) also provides relevant lessons for inclusive youth-related urban policies and strategies, namely with regard to governance and implementation. The review highlighted challenges such as stakeholders working in silos, the lack of an overarching vision, a narrow mandate or target group, and differing definitions of 'youth'. In

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87 For a list of cities that participated in EUROCITIES–CfAI, visit <http://wsdomino.eurocities.eu/eurocities/projects/Cities-for-Active-Inclusion&tpl=home> [Accessed 8 September 2021].

contrast, a shared vision for action and mechanisms for inter-governmental service coordination were identified as successful features of effective governance and implementation (*ibid.*).

Developing joined-up strategies and governance mechanisms to tackle youth unemployment is a particularly important function for partnerships working within local labour markets. It is vital that local organizations are well networked to share knowledge and emerging good practice. They can play an invaluable role as brokers or ‘linking organizations’, connecting clients to follow-on programmes, thereby aiding continuous learning and development. Policies and approaches can also benefit from being ‘co-created’ with local youth to promote greater ownership and ensure that local initiatives are better adapted to their needs (OECD, 2013).

Based on an analysis of good practice in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region,<sup>88</sup> the OECD recently presented a set of recommendations on how to mainstream youth considerations in public governance, including issues such as public sector integrity (securing a fair youth share of public resources), public budgeting (increasing the impact of youth programming), public human resource management (removing structural obstacles to youth employment), regulatory policy (increasing regulatory quality for inclusive policy-making and job creation), local governance (promoting youth engagement at all levels of government – see example in **Box 7**), and gender equality (tackling the structural and cultural barriers to equal opportunities) (OECD, 2016). Decentralization is seen as an opportunity to promote youth engagement and deliver tailored youth policy. A gradual transfer of competencies to public authorities can be observed at the sub-national level, which has the potential to redefine the way youth policy is being designed and implemented. However, local authorities often suffer from weak institutional capacities to shape programmes and frequently depend on transfers and subsidies due to a lack of fiscal autonomy (*ibid.*).

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88 For a list of MENA countries, see <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/menaregion/pages/menaregionindex.aspx> [Accessed 8 September 2021].

### **Box 7. Local authorities and youth working together in Tunisia**

National strategies for youth engagement at the local government level do also exist in many countries; for example, in Tunisia, a promising government-led approach, Agora – Débat de la ville, has been launched by the National Youth Observatory (Observatoire National de la Jeunesse, ONJ) at the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The project's target group are young people from the periphery of cities, members of youth organizations and youth centres. ONJ cooperates with various societal actors, in particular youth and sports facilities and municipal youth centres, and presents an encouraging example of strengthening youths' voices and capacities to interact with local authorities on a more regular basis. Recognizing that few if any public spaces exist for youth to discuss politics and the future of their neighbourhoods with the local authorities, the project focuses on three priority areas: the creation of web community radios; the training of 150 active youth leaders in communities, and the organization of city debates.

*Source:* OECD (2016a, p. 99)

While we can observe examples in which national youth-related policies, strategies and programmes have been implemented through local governance structures and institutions (top-down approach), it is difficult to find evidence of innovative and effective local initiatives that have succeeded in influencing policies at the national level or scaling up promising programmes to national-wide coverage (bottom-up approach).

### **Conclusions: Key issues and recommendations for policy-makers**

'Leave no one behind' is one of the principles of the Education 2030 Agenda; 'leaving no one out' is an imperative for the development of inclusive cities and societies. Preventing youth at risk from becoming NEETs and reducing the number of young people with NEET status should (continue to) be an important policy concern for local authorities of cities and municipalities. Related policy responses and measures are reflected in the Key Features of

“Leave no one behind” is one of the principles of the Education 2030 Agenda; “leaving no one out” is an imperative for the development of inclusive cities and societies.’

Learning Cities, in particular the components of inclusive learning in the education system and effective learning for and in the workplace (UIL, 2015). They can only be implemented effectively if the fundamental conditions for building a learning city are provided, namely strong political will and commitment, improved governance and participation for all stakeholders, and boosted resource mobilization and utilization.

Until recently, most countries focused little attention on the specific NEET problem. As a result, overall policy measures targeting NEETs are rarely documented, and even less so at the local level. Rather, information is available on general youth and employment policies that have been developed to address different youth problems. In this context, the broad category of ‘unemployed youth’ is undoubtedly the first target group for most of the policies that are being implemented in cities and countries. The ‘unemployed’ is not the only group among the NEETs, however: there are huge numbers of young people around the globe whose basic education rights remain unfulfilled, and there are important vulnerable groups among the youth at risk, such as family carers, discouraged workers and ‘the inactive’, that require policy attention (Bardak, Maseda and Rosso, 2015). Moreover, young women who are ‘inactive’ in the labour market and invisible in the dynamics of the local economy due to their family responsibilities are rarely on the radar of policy-makers and providers of support services for unemployed youth or NEETs.

While in many countries of the Global North, existing safety nets help NEETs undertake further education and training or enter the labour market, such services and support systems (e.g. second-chance education and training opportunities, the provision of unemployment, and other types of social benefits, employment services support, career guidance, geographical mobility funding, etc.) are not a matter of course in most low- and middle-income countries.

The analysis of experiences from a variety of contexts indicates that it is crucial to understand the risk factors for becoming a

NEET and to identify the most vulnerable groups among the NEETs. If the risk factors – such as gender, low levels of education and basic competencies (i.e. literacy and numeracy), early school leaving, a poor socio-economic background, disability, membership of an ethnic or cultural minority, and shortcomings in the quality and relevance of education and training – are not taken into account at the design and implementation stage, related policies may not be able to reach the most vulnerable groups, who are more likely to drop off the radar. It is important to know and understand the root causes of young people's exclusion; however, very little research has been carried out concerning the underlying

'If the risk factors – such as gender, low levels of education and basic competencies (i.e. literacy and numeracy), early school leaving, a poor socio-economic background, disability, membership of an ethnic or cultural minority, and shortcomings in the quality and relevance of education and training – are not taken into account at the design and implementation stage, related policies may not be able to reach the most vulnerable groups, who are more likely to drop off the radar.'



reasons that keep young people out of education, training and employment. In addition, little research has been done to address the issue of the expectations of youth at risk by listening to young people themselves (e.g. Barford and Coombe, 2019).

Some analysed studies into NEET policies and strategies reveal that quick fixes, piecemeal approaches and business-as-usual responses are often relied upon, because coherent and comprehensive approaches would require an appropriate institutional setup, coordination mechanisms and a long-term perspective. Serious concerns have been raised about the effectiveness of many of the measures that have so far been implemented and their impact on young people (Bardak, Maseda and Rosso, 2015). An effective and scalable approach to the NEET challenge is probably difficult to identify given the heterogeneity of the target groups – and not least because the nature of the challenge differs by place (city) and society. However, the analysed experiences and good practice examples from different cities, countries and regions in this chapter allow for a better understanding of key issues or challenges and a summary of recommendations on how the NEET challenge can be addressed more effectively in the future.

### *Key issues and challenges*

Interestingly, most of the issues or challenges made explicit in the examined literature are related to weak information (data) on the NEET phenomenon, governance and implementation. Little mention can be found regarding the design of policy, strategy and programme responses. One major issue is in the identification of, reaching out to and tracking of NEETs. If available data are not disaggregated by specific features that mark vulnerabilities, it is difficult to adequately identify risk factors and sub-groups, a precondition for targeted interventions. Available data often do not permit an evaluation of whether becoming a NEET was a voluntary decision or not, or situate a (potential) NEET at a specific stage in their path from education to work. This means that there are important knowledge gaps regarding the needs and expectations of NEETs.

Strong education, training and labour market information and analysis systems, which cover the non-formal and informal sectors and qualitative job aspects, are often lacking to inform policy, set targets and evaluate impacts. In case such information systems exist, they are only used in isolation: data are not cross-referenced to better understand disparities, vulnerabilities and what works best. The absence of formal evaluation or the lack of measurable targets (and baseline information) in many of the analysed experiences is impeding informed policy-making. The effectiveness of policy measures and their impact is rarely assessed systematically or with a longitudinal approach. Lacking documentation, monitoring and evaluation of youth programmes was identified as a major weakness and makes the objective assessment of the cities' performance in youth development nearly impossible.

Although cities, municipalities and local governments may have youth policies in place, they often do not address the particular vulnerabilities of NEETs, and there are challenges with regard to implementation. Policies are not backed by implementation plans, adequate resources and capacities, and are often unknown to the responsible officers. Institutional capacities to provide youth programmes are often challenged by unclear objectives, lack of targets, narrow focus and lack of personnel. It was found that, despite their dedication and performance, youth representatives are often not given the recognition they deserve. The need for professionalization, awareness and training on youth matters on all levels was articulated as an urgent issue.

Lack of clarity in responsibilities, of an overarching vision, a narrow mandate or target group working in silos, limited capacities for coordination, and the absence of effective accountability mechanisms often makes implementation difficult. Outreach strategies and approaches to promote active inclusion of young people have been reported as inadequate and failing to reach the most vulnerable and at-risk youth. Ensuring a better gender balance in policy responses and overcoming gender-based barriers were also identified as challenges.

When implementing national programmes and policies for young people at the local level, local authorities are often faced with lack of flexibility, limited duration of such initiatives, budget cuts and other financial constraints. Securing sustainable funding is viewed as one of the most significant challenges by local governments, providers and non-governmental organizations in particular. The need to adapt continuously to local labour market developments also poses challenges to many providers of youth programmes.

### *Recommendations*

Taking the above into consideration, the following courses of action are recommended when responding to the NEET challenge.

Apply a lifelong learning approach. This implies:

- using a holistic education and training strategy that cuts across the lifespan of individuals at risk of being excluded;
  - framing related efforts within the wider strategy of building a learning city: policies and measures to meet the needs and expectations of youth at risk should be conceived as part of a flexible learning system that allows for step-wise progression through alternative pathways from education to work;
  - considering non-formal and informal learning and training models as part of national education systems;
  - developing mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning, which enable individuals to make use of their learning in terms of career progression and further learning.
2. Tackle the NEET challenge as part of wider strategies for social and economic inclusion. Multiple interrelated factors contribute to the risk of becoming a NEET. It is therefore necessary to identify and address the root causes of disadvantage and exclusion.

3. Promote integrated ‘packages’ of strategies, measures and comprehensive youth policy frameworks, linking general and vocational education and training systems with (self-) employment and social policies, covering both the formal and informal sector, to address wider economic and social patterns as well as cultural norms and citizenship issues.

4. Engage youth in decision-making. By involving youth in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of a holistic youth strategy, local governments can ensure that programmes and services respond to their needs and aspirations. Local youth councils can help identify needs and hold authorities to account. Engage young people in the strategic allocation of youth-related public expenditures, using participatory budgeting approaches.

5. Combine prevention, reintegration and compensation policies into a process-oriented pathway from education to work. This should include measures to prevent and reintegrate early school leavers, ease school-to-work transition, foster employability and remove practical and logistical barriers. Prioritize as much as possible early intervention to reduce early school leaving and promote gender equality and anti-discrimination actions by tackling the structural and cultural barriers to equal opportunities for young women and other vulnerable groups.

6. Take an evidence-based approach to develop policy measures. The necessary steps are the identification of excluded groups of young people, recognizing what stage of their specific exclusion from education, training or employment they are at, which factors have influenced this situation of exclusion, what their specific education and training needs are, and then intervening with the most effective type of support.

7. Seek smart targeting of NEET groups. Concentrate policy measures on single sub-groups of NEETs based on sound evidence of the reasons for their exclusion. Design outreach strategies to engage the most vulnerable groups. Community outreach strategies and co-creating taster- and short-engagement programmes with young people are essential in accessing the hardest to reach.

8. Identify and foster innovative models, approaches and methods to ensure good-quality interventions. Design integrated programmes that combine several elements, such as training, work experience, life skills, digital competence, and basic competences and education. Promote work-based learning schemes, such as

apprenticeships, internships and traineeships, and prioritize the acquisition of skills and competences that meet labour market needs. Train teachers in specific competences regarding social inclusion, coaching, guidance, counselling and personalized approaches.

9. Strengthen governance and implementation at all levels. Link national, regional and local levels through a shared vision, with clear roles and responsibilities, and good coordination, communication and information lines among all involved stakeholders. Effective management systems lead to alignment between policy, services, and funding. Promote regular collection and analysis of information and data. Ensure that monitoring and evaluation of policies are embedded in the management system and are used to improve future interventions to support the inclusion of NEETs. This is especially important in contexts of scarce resources.

10. Develop partnerships and cooperation among all relevant actors and institutions. Allow different stakeholders to play a role in the design and implementation of policies. Create a coalition of committed stakeholders and strengthen multi-sector and multi-stakeholder partnerships. Engage employers and private sector actors with a focus on local economic growth and job creation.

11. Strengthen institutional capacities. Establish strategically located units responsible for youth development, secure sufficient budgets for youth development, create structures for youth participation, ensure adequate administrative structures and support facilities, and train and professionalize involved personnel and practitioners at all levels.

12. Build on what works. Learning from successful NEET experiences can help local authorities and front-line providers to be more successful in preventing poor outcomes for young people. Provide networking and exchange opportunities for policy-makers, providers and practitioners. Promote robust evaluations and research on programmes and policy effectiveness.

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# Chapter 4

## Sustainable cities: Inclusion, equity and lifelong learning for persons with disabilities

### Introduction

In 1990, at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, UNESCO and partners launched the Education for All (EFA) movement. It was recognized as a paramount step towards breaking the cycle of poverty and vulnerability (OXFAM, 1999) and aimed to commit governments to improving primary schooling and reducing adult illiteracy and gender disparities over the next 10 years. Although undoubtedly relevant, these three objectives excluded several other vulnerable groups. Then, in 1994, UNESCO co-hosted with the Government of Spain the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, in the northwest of the country, to promote the ‘principle of inclusion’, based on which:

schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities, or children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups (UNESCO and MEC, 1994, p. 6).

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According to the UNESCO Guidelines for Inclusion, the Salamanca Statement provides a structure for discussion on how to move policy and practice forward (UNESCO, 2005, p. 9). The statement argues that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are ‘... the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all’ (UNESCO and MEC, 1994, p. ix).

A decade after Jomtien, in April 2000, over 1,000 participants from 164 countries gathered in Dakar, Senegal, for the World Education Forum to assess EFA developments (UNESCO, 2000a, p. 7). The event was also an opportunity to remind UNESCO Member States of their commitment to make ‘education for all’ a reality and to set new deadlines and goals to make this happen. At the same time, other vulnerable groups were incorporated into the EFA’s goals, including (a) children in situation of disadvantage and (b) young people with learning needs (UNESCO, 2000b, p. 8).

That same year, leaders of five international disability NGOs issued a declaration, calling on governments to support a convention on the rights of peoples with disabilities (UN DESA, 2018, p. 13). Following a proposal by the Government of Mexico, the UN General Assembly established an ad hoc committee to consider proposals for a comprehensive and integral convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of people with disabilities, based on a holistic approach (ibid.). Disability rights organizations, including the International Disability Alliance as coordinator, participated actively in the drafting process – in particular in seeking a role for disabled people and their organizations in the implementation and monitoring of what became the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (ibid., p. 14).

Mainstreaming disability issues is a crucial strategy for sustainable development. The CRPD recognizes that ‘disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others’ (UN, 2006, p. 1). It

therefore stresses ‘the need to promote and protect the human rights of all persons with disabilities, including those who require more intensive support’ (ibid., p. 2). It is worth emphasizing that Article 24 of the CRPD establishes education as a right and not as a goal, thereby making it the responsibility of governments to ensure ‘this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity’ and must devise ‘an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning’ (ibid., p. 14).

Despite numerous reports denouncing the educational inequality experienced by persons with a disability, however, progress on international guidelines and national initiatives promoting inclusive education for vulnerable groups remains hindered by educational exclusion, discrimination and lack of opportunities. In fact, a 2018 paper published by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) on education and disability shows that persons 25 years and older without disabilities have nearly 50 per cent more years of schooling than persons with disabilities (UIS, 2018, p. 16).

The data on children with disabilities who are not in school are even more disquieting: for instance, in Cambodia, there is a 50-percent-age-point difference between the out-of-school rates for disabled and non-disabled children (57 per cent vs 7 per cent) (ibid., p. 20). According to the study, ‘children with disabilities are two times as likely to be out of school as their non-disabled peers in Cambodia’ (ibid.). ‘In other countries,’ it continues, ‘the gap is not as wide as in Cambodia but still proves the stark inequality between children with and without disabilities. The out-of-school rates of disabled children are two to three times as high as those of non-disabled children in Colombia, the Maldives, Uganda and Yemen’ (ibid.).

Over 25 years on from Salamanca, there have been significant worldwide developments; nonetheless, much more needs to be done. Persons with disabilities continue to experience invisibility in the social network and face restricted access to learning opportunities. This chapter therefore addresses the experiences of exclusion that persons with disabilities encounter and that hinders human development, as well as the correlation between

poverty and disability that is often overlooked by governments, institutions and society. Finally, and crucially, it calls on cities to be inclusive, safe, accessible, equitable and sustainable, and to provide lifelong learning opportunities to all vulnerable groups, including persons with and without disabilities.

## A worldwide panorama of social exclusion for people with disabilities

One of the greatest problems facing the world today is the growing number of persons who are excluded from meaningful participation in the economic, social, political and cultural life of their communities. Such a society is neither efficient nor safe (UNESCO, 2003, p. 3).

Immersed in waves of changes affecting people in different regions of the planet, the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the new millennium saw the significant expansion of globalization. At the same time, it unveiled deep disparities represented by solid inequalities of opportunities between countries, regions, communities, social groups and individuals. Inequalities and lack of opportunities, among other barriers to human development, increase the risk of social exclusion and marginalization in society. Social exclusion, meanwhile, involves at least four factors: (1) the excluded, (2) the institutions from which they are excluded, (3) the agents whose actions result in the exclusion and (4) the process through which exclusion occurs. Social exclusion is a relational phenomenon, implicating those with power and affecting those without. To complicate the dynamic, power asymmetries are observed even within groups of excluded individuals (Narayan et al., 2000, p. 229).

According to the UNESCO *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education* (2009), in today's increasingly globalized world, with rising disparities in income distribution and with 60 per cent of the world's population living on only 6 per cent of the world's income, half of the world's population live on US\$2 a day and over 1 billion people live on less than US\$1 a day, suggesting that 'poverty is a threat to peace' (ibid., p. 5). Moreover, at the time of the policy



guideline's publication, 75 million children of primary school age were not enrolled in school, half of them girls, with around 70 per cent of these children living in countries in the Global South, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia (ibid.). Children with disabilities accounted for one-third of all out-of-school children – that is, around 25 million children with a disability were not in school (ibid., p. 21).

The World Bank's 2018 World Development Report offers this updated data on children in school:

Exclusions based on poverty, location, gender, and ethnicity persist. In 2014, an estimated 61 million primary school-age children and 202 million secondary school-age youth – with a disproportionate share from poor households – were out of school. Only about a quarter of the poorest children in low-income countries – compared with three-quarters in the richest – complete primary school (WB, 2018, p. 60).

The gap in primary school attendance rates between disabled and non-disabled children ranges from

In the context of exclusion, persons with disability are extremely vulnerable. In fact, 'they are more likely to live in poverty, experience higher rates of violence, neglect and abuse, and are among the most marginalized in any crisis-affected community' (UN, 2020, p. 2). They also have 'unequal access to health care services and, therefore, have unmet health care needs compared to the general population' (WHO, 2011, p. 57)<sup>89</sup> and are 'among the population groups most likely to suffer exclusion from education' (UIS, 2018, p. 3). According to the World Health Organization (WHO) *World Report on Disability*,

**children with disabilities are less likely to start school than their peers without disabilities. They also have lower rates of staying in school and of being promoted, as well as lower transition rates to post-school**

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89 'Global data on the need for rehabilitation services, the type and quality of measures provided, and estimates of unmet need do not exist. Data on rehabilitation services are often incomplete and fragmented. When data are available, comparability is hampered by differences in definitions, classifications of measures and personnel, populations under study, measurement methods, indicators, and data sources – for example, individuals with disabilities, service providers, or program managers may experience needs and demands differently' (WHO, 2011, p. 102).

education. [...] Education completion gaps are found across all age groups [in both] low-income and high-income countries. [...] The gap in primary school attendance rates between disabled and non-disabled children ranges from 10% in India to 60% in Indonesia and, for secondary education, from 15% in Cambodia to 58% in Indonesia. [...] Even in countries with high primary school enrolment rates, such as those in eastern Europe, many children with disabilities do not attend school (WHO, 2011, pp. 206–208).

Therefore, poverty, lack of formal education, illiteracy, lack of access to health and rehabilitation provisions, school segregation combined with social isolation, attitudinal barriers such as discrimination and prejudice, and other disadvantages create, perpetuate and systematically increase the vulnerability of people with disabilities. Moreover, disability affects vulnerable populations disproportionately: results from the World Health Survey indicated a higher disability prevalence in lower-income countries than in higher-income countries (WHO, 2011). People from the poorest backgrounds, women and older people also have a higher prevalence of disability. Data from the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) programme show that, in selected countries, children from poorer households and those in ethnic minority groups are at significantly higher risk of disability than other children (ibid., p. 36). People with disabilities, independent of diagnosis, also face discrimination in their communities, experience rights violations and are seen as ‘incapable’. This label is still the predominant lens through which society views disability, and translates as a hindrance to disabled persons’ learning, participation and contributions to social development (Oliver, 1983).

Despite a number of international guidelines and documents published by UN sectors, governments and organizations, many people with disabilities living in urban and rural areas around the world are still not treated equally. There is neither a general comprehension of their rights nor a commitment to promote essential changes so that they receive the same opportunities as those offered to people without disabilities. The exclusionary reality that

surrounds this social group is extremely critical, as a recent white paper from the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) illustrates:

People with disabilities are underrepresented in social justice groups. Even disability advocacy groups tend to exclude members of the disability community, particularly those with mental and cognitive disabilities and those belonging to non-dominant groups, such as people in LGBTQ communities and people of color (Hughes, 2016, p. 2).

The multifaceted contexts within which people with disabilities live is highly complex – with many factors still unexplored. The study *Deficiência e Criminalidade: estudo sobre uma jovem com deficiência intelectual em situação de privação de liberdade* (Disability and crime: A study on a young woman with intellectual disability in a situation of deprivation of liberty) (Carvalho and Ferreira, 2016), for example, shows that research into the number of women with disabilities in prison is practically non-existent (ibid., p. 13).

However, in order to develop inclusive, equitable and lifelong learning cities, we must explore these hidden aspects and consider the demands of this vulnerable population. To achieve this, those in charge of implementing inclusive lifelong learning and sustainable development must promote mechanisms to listen to the voices of people with disabilities and to understand their needs. We must consider and respect the motto ‘nothing about us without us’;<sup>90</sup> otherwise, the disabled population will remain invisible.

### *Make disability visible*

Invisibility occurs when an individual (or social group) is physically cut off from the social network that binds her/him to society. According to John McGee, the founder of the Gentle Teaching approach for people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, such a bond creates warmth, relationship reciprocity and ties of affection that bring people closer to each other (McGee, 2021).

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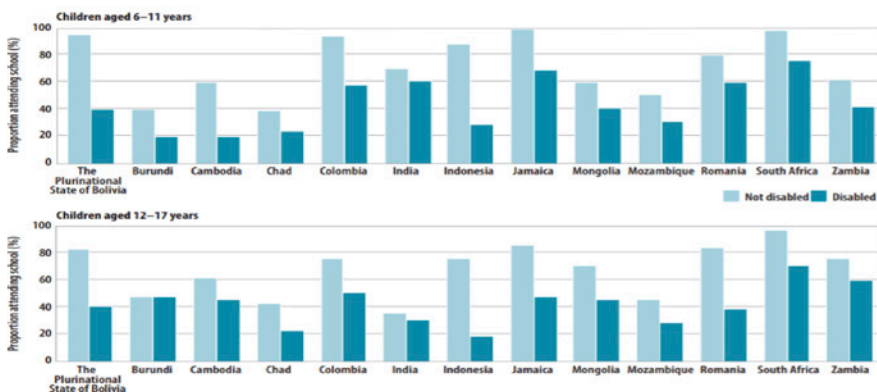
<sup>90</sup> The motto ‘nothing about us without us’ was adopted by disability rights activists in the 1990s following the 1998 publication of James Charlton’s book of the same name. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nothing\\_About\\_Us\\_Without\\_Us](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nothing_About_Us_Without_Us) [Accessed 15 September 2021].

Many people with disabilities remain segregated from mainstream life, however, and are therefore prevented from developing these bonds.

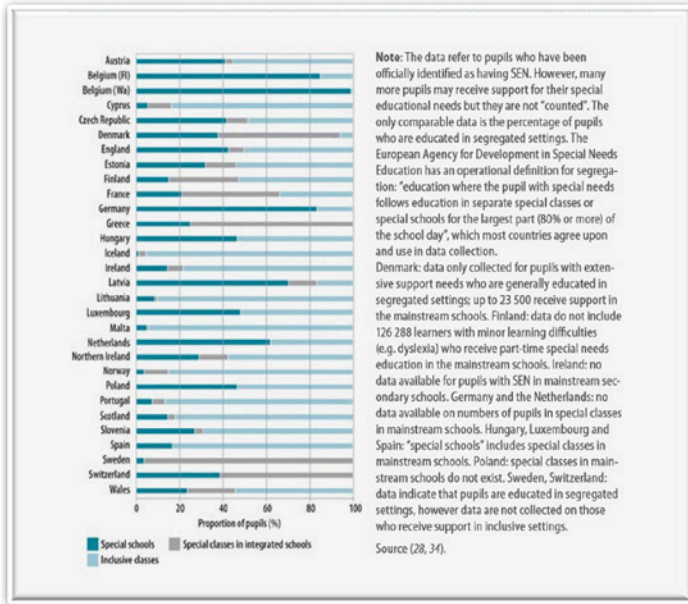
According to *Disabled Children's Rights: A Practical Guide* (Save the Children Sweden, 2001, p. 21), the invisibility of people with disabilities begins in childhood and results from:

- segregation and institutionalization, implying the traditionally exclusionary practices that crystallize in many cultures;
- traditional beliefs and superstitions that make parents ashamed of their children with disability and wish to hide them from public view;
- a lack of support, information and opportunities for families with a child with a disability to acquire skills and develop a better understanding of their disability;
- priority given to specialized treatments, therapies and rehabilitation programmes instead of schooling and opportunities to live and learn together.

These reasons extend beyond the mere absence of inclusive, equitable educational experiences and public policies, and are contingent on current practices of segregation, isolation and exclusion of students with disabilities from mainstream schools in both high-, middle- and lower-income countries, as shown in **Figures 1 and 2**.



**Figure 1.** Proportion of children aged 6–11 and 12–17 years with and without a disability who are in school. Source: WHO, 2011, p. 208



**Figure 2.** Delivery of education by type of model for selected European countries. Source: WHO, 2011, p. 211

By comparing **Figures 1** and **2**, it is possible to verify how a child with a disability could either receive access to segregated special education services or could be institutionalized for life, depending on the social, economic, cultural and educational development of each country.

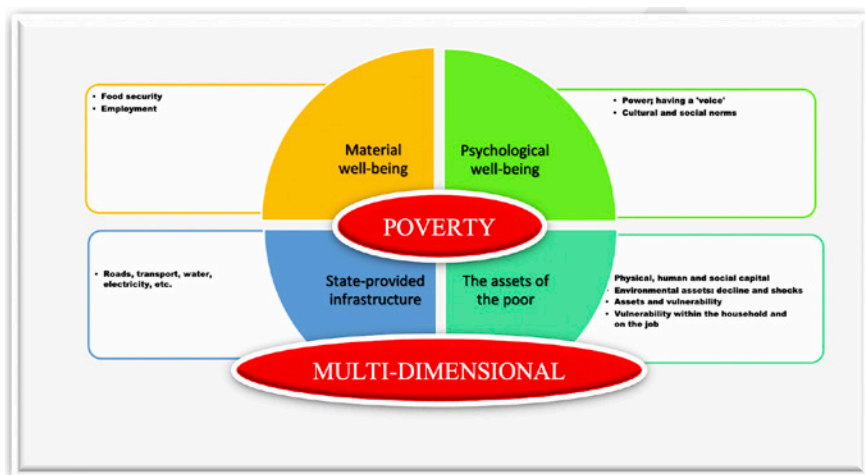
The segregation of children with disabilities from their non-disabled peers is prevalent in several wealthy European countries (see **Figure 2**), and yet, as early as 2008, IBE–UNESCO (International Bureau of Education) published its final report of the 48th session of the International Conference on Education, entitled *Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future* (IBE–UNESCO, 2008), which called attention to the educational inequality experienced by students with disabilities in wealthier countries. Despite available resources, it argued, many young people with disabilities leave school with no viable qualifications, others are placed in various forms of special education away from the mainstream, and some simply

choose to drop out, perceiving the curriculum offered as irrelevant for their context. In both developed and developing regions, it further noted, there is a common challenge: attaining high-quality equitable education for all learners (ibid., p. 5). The situation is even more critical in poorer countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, where persons with disabilities may be out of school for life or may only access primary education lacking in quality. For instance, as shown in Figure 1, only 20 per cent of children and young people with disabilities aged 6 to 11 and 12 to 17 years are in school in Indonesia, Cambodia, Chad and Burundi.

### Poverty and disability: A challenge for inclusive, sustainable cities to overcome

Poverty is pain; it feels like a disease. It attacks a person not only materially but also morally. It eats away one's dignity and drives one into total despair (WB, 2001, p. 40).

The findings of the World Bank report *Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?* (Narayan et al., 2000), a literature review study, comprises data from over 40,000 women and men living in 50 countries. It presents evidence of the effects of poverty from Georgia to Brazil, Nigeria to the Philippines, with similar underlying themes emerging: hunger, deprivation, powerlessness, violation of dignity, social isolation, state corruption and gender inequity – but also resilience, resourcefulness and solidarity (ibid., p. 3). **Figure 3** shows those factors that comprise poverty – a multidimensional social problem – defined by the narratives collected from people living in extreme deprivation.



**Figure 3.** Dimensions of poverty (Source: The authors, based on Narayan et al., 2000)

The multidimensional feature of poverty is represented by its dynamics and complexity; it is a social phenomenon that manifests in pattern and shape and varies between social groups, by season and country. It also has both gender and location specificity and is framed institutionally (ibid.). Psychologically, poor people report feelings of powerlessness, voicelessness, dependence, shame and humiliation. In this harsh context, basic infrastructure such as ‘roads (particularly in rural areas), transportation and clean water’ (ibid., p. 5) are the primary problems of daily life. Poor people experience fear of illness and poor health, conditions that often lead to destitution. Surprisingly, income is seldom mentioned; instead, the focus is on ‘managing assets – physical, human, social and environmental – as a way to cope with ... vulnerability’ (ibid., p. 5).

The World Bank report also shows that the lives of this vulnerable population remain unchanged by government intervention; in other words, the state has been largely ineffective in addressing their basic needs, and the few initiatives that exist are considered neither sufficient nor effective in eliminating the circumstances of poverty. Furthermore, poor people report that, should they attempt to protect and access their rights, their interactions with

state representatives (schools, the health system, police officers, justice departments, and even social assistance or relief assistance staff, among others) are often marked by disrespect, rights violations, rudeness, humiliation, harassment and stonewalling (ibid.).

The correlation between poverty and disability was already acknowledged in the 1990s (UN, 2006; Barron and Amerena, 2007). Despite this, very little had been done in terms of international guidelines and national public policies to consider or alleviate this correlation, and so it remains a neglected issue even though it affects millions of people worldwide. This neglect is seen again in the World Bank report, where the issue of disability, specifically physical disability, appears only in the clarification of the excluded groups:

While the way each of these groups is excluded is context-specific, certain social differences continue to arise as grounds for exclusion. These differences include belonging to a particular ethnic, gender, caste, religion, or age group; living in a particular geographic area; or having certain physical disabilities. While we present excluded groups in discrete categories, it is difficult to generalize about which groups are the most likely to be excluded in which society, and from what they are excluded. Various forms of social difference overlap and intersect in complex ways over time (ibid., p. 237).

Health is regarded as a major issue that threatens people living in poverty; it is also a major issue that threatens people with a disability. This strong connection makes it hard to break the vicious poverty-disability cycle, because, while poverty causes an increase in the likelihood of having a disability, having a disability also increases the likelihood of being poor. The relationship between these two factors varies according to country and contexts (World Bank et al., 2004, p. 11); for example, how the needs of a person with a disability are addressed depends on whether they have access to rehabilitation and health services, education and social activities or devices (e.g. a wheelchair, hearing aid or computer) through the state. Corroborating this, França (2015) argues that poverty (or lack of financial resources) prevents the access to appropriate means that would prevent disability from emerging. On



the other hand, disability leads to poverty when it denies a person access to social and economic opportunities for development and participation (ibid., p. 126).

In the context of the grave poverty panorama that affects this population, the concept of ‘inclusive development’ emerged in the twenty-first century and was adopted in a series of scholarly and policy documents. Inclusive development implies an ongoing process of scrutinizing those groups or individuals who are included and those who are excluded from the improvements of well-being and society at large. It requires understanding of the methods with which – and the grounds on which – inequality in society can be reduced by examining the institutionalized and naturalized relations between the poor and the wealthy (Gupta, Pouw and Ros-Tonen, 2015; Sachs, 2006). Inclusive development implies:

- promoting epistemic communities, communities of practice and social movements;
- transforming governance into an interactive model to enable empowerment;
- adopting appropriate governance instruments (Gupta, Pouw, and Ros-Tonen, 2015, p. 541).

‘Inclusive development implies an ongoing process of scrutinizing those groups or individuals who are included and those who are excluded from the improvements of well-being and society at large.’

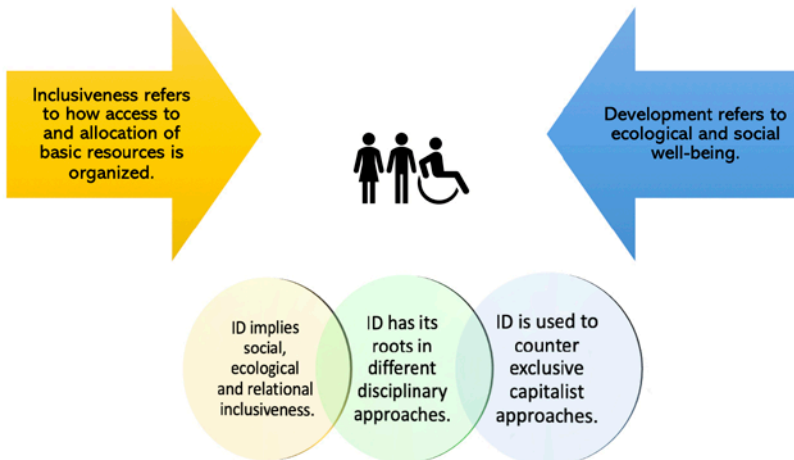
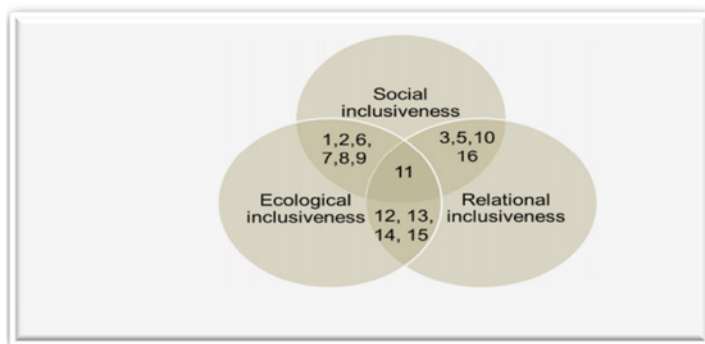


Figure 4. What is ‘inclusive development’? (Source: Authors)

Sustainable cities and inclusive development are aligned concepts: both introduce a new method for relating to data and understanding societal, political and economic processes. Both also raise questions such as ‘Who benefits from a particular good?’ and ‘How can the marginalized be empowered?’ Sustainable cities implementing sustainable development approaches (government departments and institutions, public and private sectors) must adopt inclusive development as a guideline because it emphasizes the social and environmental aspects of sustainability insofar as it is not just a technocratic and instrumental approach. **Figure 5** shows the strong articulation of inclusive development within the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“Sustainable cities and inclusive development are aligned concepts: both introduce a new method for relating to data and understanding societal, political and economic processes. Both also raise questions such as “Who benefits from a particular good?” and “How can the marginalized be empowered?””



**Figure 5.** Articulation of inclusive development within the SDGs (Source: Gupta and Vegelin, 2016).

It is generally accepted that inclusive development focuses on the social and ecological aspects of sustainable development – and, in particular, the maintenance of environmental services, which are particularly vital for the poor and people with disabilities.

Ultimately, inclusive development will only be brought about through genuine interactive governance that provides the instruments and creates the conditions for adaptive learning and the empowerment of marginalized people (Gupta, Pouw and Ros-Tonen, 2015, p. 553).

It is important to emphasize here that the relationship between disability and poverty is not confined to lower- and middle-income countries. A 2009 background paper from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Sickness, Disability and Work: Keeping on Track in the Economic Downturn*, reveals a similar correlation in wealthier countries. Data from 21 upper middle- and high-income countries show higher rates of poverty among working-age people with disabilities than among their non-disabled cohorts in all but three countries (Norway, Slovakia and Sweden). The relative poverty risk (poverty rate of working-age disabled persons in relation to their non-disabled cohorts) was shown to be the highest – more than two times higher – in Australia, Ireland and the Republic of Korea, and the lowest – only slightly higher than for people without disabilities – in Iceland, Mexico and the Netherlands. Working-aged people with disabilities were

found to be twice as likely to be unemployed and, when employed, are more likely to work part-time. Moreover, unless they are highly educated, working-age persons with disabilities were more likely to have lower incomes (OECD, 2009). The paper goes on to note that

sickness and disability generate considerable costs to society. On average, OECD countries spend 1.2 per cent of their GDP on disability benefits alone. This figure reaches 2 per cent when including sickness benefits. ... This is almost 2.5 times as much as what is spent on unemployment benefits. In some countries, e.g. the Netherlands and Norway, expenditures are much higher, close to 5 per cent of the GDP (ibid., p. 13).

A major barrier for social and educational inclusion in high-income countries arises the moment the disability is diagnosed and is based on whether the child is likely to be institutionalized in the early stages of life or sent to a segregated setting (e.g. a 'special' school). Institutionalization is a barrier because it prevents persons with educational needs from experiencing life in a family, neighbourhood or comprehensive school, in which relatives, communities and peers interact. By being segregated, persons with disabilities have very little access to mainstream social, language, behavioural and academic experiences. The lack of these opportunities hinders development (UNESCO, 1993; UNESCO and MEC, 1994).

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) defines persons with disabilities as 'those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others' (UN, 2006, p. 4). This reaffirms the importance of environment for persons with disabilities: on the one hand, environment can act as a barrier hindering access to learning opportunities and participation; alternatively, it can be rich with opportunities that are crucial for learning, development and, later, participation in every level of society, with equal conditions. While barriers lead to exclusion and poor human development, opportunities lead to inclusion, participation, learning and growth.

While exclusion can lead to economic poverty, and while social exclusion and poverty are deeply interconnected, they are not one and the same thing. Discrimination and isolation – the hallmarks of social exclusion – have a profound negative impact on quality of life. There are two aspects to this relationship: first, being poor can lead to social stigmatization and marginalization from institutions, leading to greater poverty; second, while social exclusion does not always lead to economic poverty, it is always linked to exclusion from institutions of society and always leads to a poorer sense of well-being (Narayan et al., 2000, pp. 229–230). Addressing the welfare of disabled persons and their families, together with ensuring quality health and rehabilitation systems that serve this vulnerable group with humanity and professionalism, should therefore be a priority for all sustainable learning cities.

Like other oppressed groups throughout history, disabled people have been marginalized; this has led to minimal attention to the historical, cultural, political and legal dimensions of disability. Through neglect, ignorance, prejudice and false assumptions, as well as through exclusion, distinction and separation, society prevents people with disabilities from exercising the economic, social, or cultural rights on an equal basis with people without disabilities. The effects of disability-based discrimination have been particularly severe in the fields of education, employment, housing, transport, cultural life and access to public places and services (UW Disability Studies Program, 2021).

This population must access these services as early as possible. By dismantling the barriers that keep disabled persons from educational opportunities and community life, we develop the conditions that enable them to thrive.

## **Sustainability, inclusion and lifelong learning for people with disabilities**

Human needs are fundamentally hierarchical in nature. And if certain needs are not met, for example if housing is too expensive, then dissatisfaction will follow. The SCI [Sustainable Cities Index] and other studies show that even highly developed cities can struggle to meet the basic needs of their citizens. As a result, the level of peoples' sat-

isfaction associated with their purpose or well-being is undermined. Viewed from a citizen's perspective, a city that is highly ranked as sustainable but with elevated levels of congestion not meeting accessibility needs is not truly sustainable (Arcadis, 2018, p. 3).

In 2016, an estimated 54.5 percent of the world's population lived in urban settlements. By 2030, urban areas are projected to house 60 per cent of people globally and one in every three people will live in cities with at least half a million inhabitants. Understanding the key trends in urbanization likely to unfold over the coming years is crucial to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and for efforts to forge a new framework of urban development (UN, 2016a, p. ii).

Considering the prospective growth of cities, they must be conceived as a place for social inclusion and lifelong learning for every citizen, from childhood to adulthood, including people with disabilities. A place where everyone encounters opportunities for personal, educational and professional growth, and for a fulfilling and enjoyable life, mentally, physically and spiritually. One of the aims of the CRPD is to 'promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity' (UN, 2006, p. 3). To support this, sustainable cities must be both *inclusive* and *accessible*, insofar as these are interdependent concepts that cannot be separated. While inclusion and accessibility are conceived as 'principles' (UNESCO and MEC, 1994;

'Sustainable cities must be both *inclusive and accessible*, insofar as these are interdependent concepts that cannot be separated.'

UN, 2006), specifically for people with disabilities, accessibility is also a right (UN, 2006, p. 8). It ought to be understood, therefore, that a city's inclusivity is dependent on its accessibility.

Accessibility is an unconditional criterion for enjoying a full life. For people with disabilities, this means being independent to make decisions about everything that concerns their private lives first and foremost: using an adapted toilet in any location, dressing as they choose, interacting with friends in distinct contexts – e.g. at a party, in the classroom, in a theatre, watching a movie in the cinema with family. Accessibility is also a *sine qua non* condition for ensuring basic rights, such as enrolment and participation in lessons or activities organized by schools under identical conditions to those of non-disabled persons; access to quality health and rehabilitation services whenever necessary; treatment with due respect, information on and recognition of priority rights; the ability to apply for jobs and be considered for positions in terms of competences without discrimination; and access to the necessary training for a full professional contribution to work. Of the right to accessibility, the CRPD argues that:

to enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas (UN, 2006, p. 8).

Along with these measures, it is crucial to identify and eliminate barriers to accessibility, including:

- **Attitudinal barriers** (e.g. prejudice, discrimination, bullying, humiliation). Removing attitudinal barriers is the first step towards social inclusion, because it means that both individuals and groups are open to embracing diversity in the mainstream (UNESCO, 2000b). It involves no financial contribution; however, it is one of the most difficult barriers to eliminate, since it relates to psychosocial aspects and cultural values – that is, it is a person's attitude that determines

how one responds to the demands of a person or a social group (Silva, 2018).

- **Physical and architectural barriers** (e.g. buildings, roads, transportation and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces). Physical accessibility is the first thing to be noticed, mentioned or remembered when the focus is on accessibility, because it is represented by changes to spaces that are more visible (Lippo, 2012; Farias, 2011; Silva, 2014).
- **Information and communication barriers** (e.g. sign language, translators, image descriptions, electronic devices). Communication and information are at the core of power relationships in society. Being unable to communicate (speak or interact with others) or access information (understanding, comprehension) means the denial of the right to freedom of expression (UN, 2006). Technologies and systems of communication and information must follow specific norms so that persons with a disability can access them.
- **Pedagogical and curricular barriers** (dynamic and inclusive diversified teaching methodologies, content accessible in a variety of formats – not just written). This kind of accessibility refers to a new logic to teaching and learning processes in formal, informal and non-formal education. Pedagogical accessibility derives from inclusive, participatory and dynamic teaching practices in schools, which ensures participation and the learning of curricula by all (UNESCO, 1993; UNESCO, 2000b).

Based on these barriers, it is possible to identify a strong correlation between the principles of accessibility and its concept. The objectives of a sustainable, inclusive city must therefore include initiatives and guidelines that respond to the principles of accessibility, while the concept of accessibility should guide the norms ensuring equity for persons with disabilities.

However, despite the evidence and knowledge already available on accessibility and its social importance to build a fairer society, accessibility issues remain for people with disabilities. Fortunately, the prospect of an estimated one in every three people living in cities by 2030 has prompted many cities to move towards eliminating barriers and creating access for all. **Case study 1**, from Melbourne, Australia, illustrates the relevance of implementing changes to a city to make it more accessible.



### Case study 1. Melbourne, Australia

David Meere is 52 years old, has limited vision, and lives in Melbourne, Australia, a city with a population of over 5 million.<sup>91</sup> Throughout his lifetime, he has faced several barriers, but one stands out in particular: the fear of navigating through busy shops, parks, workplaces and other social environments that are oriented towards people without disabilities. A lack of ramps and lifts, inaccessible toilets and shops, revolving doors, stairs, cobblestones and steps onto trains prevent people with disabilities from gaining access. A hectic and noisy environment is also a sensory minefield for those with functional needs.

In response to the needs of citizens with disabilities such as David's, Melbourne's Southern Cross train station developed an innovative 'beacon navigation system', which sends audio cues such as directions and alerts about malfunctioning facilities, such as escalators, etc., by means of an end-user's smartphone. Meere reports, 'I no longer have to hope there's a willing bystander or a capable staff member to provide direct assistance, insofar as [the system] allows me to use the transport hub ... with certainty and independence. It's a real game-changer.'  
*Source: Salman (2018)*

Accessibility, as an intrinsically interdisciplinary concept, has been incorporated into different fields of knowledge: social sciences, health, politics, economics and technological sciences (Lippo, 2012). These multiple facets, together with contributions from persons with disabilities, must be taken into account by governments and stakeholders who are in the process of developing sustainable cities. This process also involves the identification and assessment of barriers, based on which a set of inclusive actions towards reasonable accommodation and universal design (UN, 2006, p. 4) can be developed.

- **Reasonable accommodation** is the necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments that are needed to ensure that people

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<sup>91</sup> See <https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/melbourne-population> [Accessed 21 September 2021]

with disabilities exercise the same human rights and fundamental freedoms as their non-disabled peers (ibid.).

- **Universal design** means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be used by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. ‘Universal design’ shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of people with disabilities (ibid.).

### **Case study 2. Advancing universal design in Singapore**

In 2007, Singapore won a United Nations prize for implementing universal design principles<sup>92</sup> to its new living and working spaces. Since then, a 40-storey tower, CapitaGreen, located in the city’s central business district, has won several awards for its accessibility. In addition to being column-free and thus wheelchair user-friendly, CapitaGreen’s concierge is on hand to support all persons with disabilities. Other universal design elements include handrails on both sides of the building’s staircases, lift doors that remain open for longer, chairs with grab handles, features to make communication clearer for the deaf and hard of hearing community, as well as directions in Braille, tactile guidance and easy-to-read pictographs for those with limited vision. There are also barrier-free routes from underground walkways and two Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) stations. Changes to improve accessibility for people with disabilities continue in Singaporean public transport stations, with over 80 per cent now featuring barrier-free routes.

*Source:* UN (2016b)

The concept of reasonable accommodation, according to the CRPD (UN, 2006) applies when there is no universal design available. According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), reasonable accommodation is defined as ‘any change in the workplace or in the way things are customarily done that provides an equal employment opportunity to an individual with a disability’ (EEOC, 2018). Any employee is entitled to request reasonable accommodation when:

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<sup>92</sup> Universal design is the process of creating products that are accessible to people with a wide range of abilities, disabilities, and other characteristics. See <https://www.washington.edu/doi/what-universal-design-0> [Accessed 23 September 2021].

- an individual with a disability needs an accommodation to have an equal employment opportunity in the application process;
- an employee with a disability needs an accommodation to perform the essential functions of the job held or desired or to gain access to the workplace;
- an employee with a disability needs an accommodation to enjoy equal access to benefits and privileges of employment (e.g. training or office-sponsored events) (ibid., p. 3).

It is worth noting that Section IV of the document, 'Reasonable accommodation procedures', states that, when a person considers that an environment modification is required, she/he does not have to include any special words such as 'reasonable accommodation', 'disability', or 'Rehabilitation Act' (ibid., p. 5). It goes on to say:

A request is any communication in which an individual asks or states a need for the EEOC to provide or change something because of a medical condition. A person does not have to specify a particular accommodation although it is helpful if he or she can suggest one. It is sufficient for the individual requesting accommodation to state that some sort of change or assistance is required. A supervisor, manager ... should ask an individual whether they are requesting a reasonable accommodation if the nature of the initial communication is unclear (ibid.).

The American legislation concerning a person's rights in this regard is clear for employees. A request can be permanent or temporary for a person with or without a disability. Nevertheless, despite its importance for ensuring inclusion and lifelong learning for all, the concept of accessibility has not yet been fully understood, explored and incorporated in international official documents as a core principle or as a tool for implementation. The consequence of this neglect is that international guidelines on accessibility are still presented superficially in the form of 'basic norms' to ensure mostly physical accessibility. This is a mistake that reduces their importance and overlooks multiple areas of application in the lives of those with disabilities.

Safety and autonomy are relevant concepts, too, in the context of the accessibility debate, because they relate to different aspects of regular life and the exercise of citizenship. For persons with

disabilities, a sense of safety in any environment requires distinct measures to eliminate barriers that can harm a person physically or psychologically. For instance,

- a blind person should be able to walk through and around a space without the risk of falling into a hole on the street or stumbling on an unexpected step;
- any person with any disability should be able to go anywhere and interact with others without feeling harassed, intimidated or discriminated against.

Safety is a condition that goes beyond physical accessibility: it includes a feeling of well-being and the certainty that one is not in danger of any sort. In this sense, the quality of accessibility can be assessed by the grade of safety a person with a disability experiences in different contexts. Autonomy, on the other hand, relates to freedom or the capability (total or partial) that a person has in order to make use of different spaces, resources and types of equipment.

‘Safety is a condition that goes beyond physical accessibility: it includes a feeling of well-being and the certainty that one is not in danger of any sort. In this sense, the quality of accessibility can be assessed by the grade of safety a person with a disability experiences in different contexts.’

Accessibility, inclusion and lifelong learning are at the core of every opportunity that arises for persons with disabilities to achieve equity. According to the Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (more commonly known as the Delors Report), lifelong learning is a fundamental concept because it guides the achievement of competences and supports the development of a more equitable and just society, offering opportunities to individuals and groups (Delors et al., 1996). Moreover, the report, *Learning: The Treasure Within*, saw learning as a principle which rests on four pillars – learning to be, learning to know, learning to do and learning to live together – and envisaged a learning society in which everyone can learn according to her or his individual needs and interests, anywhere and anytime in an unrestricted, flexible and constructive way (ibid.). These pillars are therefore crucial for development, but can people with disabilities access such opportunities? The CRPD recognizes that the:

the valued existing and potential contributions made by persons with disabilities to the overall well-being and diversity of their communities, and that the promotion of the full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and of full participation by persons with disabilities will result in their enhanced sense of belonging and in significant advances in the human, social and economic development of society and the eradication of poverty (UN, 2006, Preamble).

For mainstream society, learning to live together – under equal conditions and opportunities – with people with disabilities is crucial for attitudinal changes and for a rupture of the medical/biological model of disability. Living together with members of this social group allows a meaningful learning process about both unfounded inequalities and, most importantly, the potentialities and rich contributions that people with disabilities offer to those without disabilities, including learning about issues that are often disregarded by formal documents, such as resilience, compassion, solidarity, care for others and collaboration instead of competition (Bradden, 2014).

The expertise that a person with a disability accumulates throughout their life contributes to their autonomy (Farias, 2011). Similarly, getting to know this population, hearing their experiences and listening to their expertise will help non-disabled people to learn about the world (UNESCO, 2013, p. 104). This pillar – learning to know – applies, therefore, to persons with and without disabilities: through curiosity and interest in knowing about different contexts, situations and experiences, we can all learn and reach conclusions in human, personal and professional contexts. Mel's story (**case study 4**) illustrates how learning can provide motivation and the necessary strength to overcome barriers.

**Case study 3. Mel, a Brazilian university student who is deaf, says 'learning every day is my motivation'.**

Mel came from a low-income family and was deaf. She was 19 years old in 2013 when she was granted a place in the computer science degree programme at a Brazilian federal university. Once there, however, she encountered accessibility barriers, including a lack of resources in the classroom, such as sign language and translator support. She overcame communication barriers by learning to lip-read while watching soap operas on TV and this helped her to attend lessons. At university, however, the lecturers did not accept her. 'It was hard to see and feel their prejudice about my capacity for learning,' she said. She was excluded continuously from peer group activities in the classroom because no one could understand her. Despite this, she says: 'I will not give up, because to get in here was already a great victory. I am a self-didactic learner, and learning every day is my motivation to achieve a university diploma. I have a dream to travel abroad for an academic exchange: I want to go to a bilingual university for the deaf in the USA.'

*Source:* Adapted by Silva (2014)

Mel's story shows how a deaf person struggles to access knowledge and qualifications when compared to persons without disabilities. If proper resources had been available and the academic community had cultivated a right to respect based on existing human diversity and individual differences, Mel could have accomplished her goals under equal conditions to her colleagues. However, she had to find ways to overcome tensions and other

factors that pushed her to the margins of education and towards reproducing a cycle of impossibilities and her family's cycle of poverty. But Mel is a fighter, and she learned the value of learning and qualifying.

Accessibility to learning opportunities is crucial for the development of a person with a disability because it leads to a practical end – that is, a competence of ‘learning to do’, the second pillar of educational philosophy (Delors et al., 1996). Being able to learn how to do things is key to achieving the fundamental competence ‘learning to live together’ (the third pillar) in a family, community and the twenty-first century labour market (ibid.). These achievements and competencies should not only be the product of a high school technical or a higher education professional qualification, but should also stem from personal curiosity, social interactions, networking, and the aptitude to work with others and solve challenges throughout life, whenever and wherever they manifest (UNESCO, 2013, p. 106).

Living with and learning from each other, as well as learning about others, is a way towards recognizing the richness of cultural and human diversity that surrounds us all. Being embedded in a culture of peace that cultivates tolerance, respect and valorization of differences brings people together towards common social goals, such as the preservation of the planet and any living being on it. Learning to know, to do and to live together leads us towards ‘learning to be’, the fourth pillar, which means recognizing yourself as a valuable human being, independent of personal traits or individual characteristics (needs, colour, abilities, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc.).

In the context of lifelong learning, a person with a disability is too often prevented from living together with and being valued as a member of a family or society, as discussed previously in this chapter. They are therefore often unable to access the pillars of lifelong learning; being segregated from the real world and mainstream life hinders a person from breaking the barriers to become a productive, independent member of society. Becoming a productive,

independent member of society is often excluded as an option for a person with a disability, because, once they are diagnosed, they are thereafter identified as ‘the girl with Down’s syndrome’, ‘the autistic boy’, or they become the ‘included’ or ‘special child’ in the classroom.

The medical/biological model of disability that focuses on the ‘impairment’ destroys the chance of a person with a disability to co-habitate, learn and become a full citizen. It places the person with a disability into a ‘personal tragedy’ (Oliver, 1983), in which – like Mel in **case study 3** – they have to struggle in educational settings without the type of support that, in many countries, is already a legal requirement. For this reason, the ‘social model of disability’, which emerged in the 1970s, aims to break down constraints and limitations imposed on disabled persons to allow them to become empowered protagonists of their own lives and development (Farias, 2011; Soares, 2010). The model conceives disability as a human diversity to be respected and embraced by society. The challenge in this model is to promote attitudinal rupture and environmental change by combating exclusionary practices while creating lifelong opportunities.

In 2018, Arcadis<sup>93</sup> examined 100 cities using 23 evaluation indicators to rank each city in terms of mobility and how sustainable they were based on three ‘pillars of sustainability’ (see **Figure 6**), which are closely aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Arcadis, 2018).<sup>94</sup> The company tracked progress in the following areas: (1) health and well-being; (2) water and sanitation; (3) industry, innovation and infrastructure; (4) inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities; (5) climate change impacts; (6) life on land; and (g) partnerships.

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93 Arcadis is a company that develops solutions to today’s global challenges, including improving the way resources are utilized, protecting the environment and creating transporting solutions. See more at: <https://www.arcadis.com/en/global/our-perspectives/> [Accessed 26 September 2021].

94 More about the SDGs can be found at <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> [Accessed 26 September 2021].





### **People**

Measures social and human implications of mobility systems including quality of life.



### **Planet**

Captures environmental impacts; "green" factors like energy, pollution and emissions.



### **Profit**

Assesses the efficiency and reliability of a mobility system to facilitate economic

**Figure 6.** *The three pillars of sustainability*

Source: Arcadis (2018).

The People sub-index measures social sustainability – quality of life in the present and prospects for improvement for future generations. ... Factors such as good health and education hold the key to current social sustainability ... a city's digital infrastructure will set the foundation for future quality of life. The people sub-index addresses UN SDGs dealing with poverty, health and well-being, education and reduced inequalities (Arcadis, 2018, p. 12).

The Planet sub-index measures the sustainable attributes of a city such as green space and pollution in addition to leading indicators of environmental mitigation such as support for low carbon transport. The planet sub-index addresses UN SDGs for clean water and sanitation, clean energy and climate action (Arcadis, 2018, p. 14).

The Profit pillar measures the economic health of a city, incorporating indicators that reflect the productive capacity of cities today, as well as the presence of infrastructure and regulatory enablers that support growth and prosperity in the present and the future. UN SDGs addressed by the Profit pillar include economic growth, innovation and infrastructure (Arcadis, 2018, p. 16).

When placing disability issues into the Arcadis pillars of sustainability, the connection between them is obvious: persons with disabilities have the right to live in an inclusive and safe environment that helps them to become more resilient. This right is dependent,

however, on the services available to them in terms of health, sanitation, water and, most of all, access to education and job opportunities in urban and rural areas. Altogether, these conditions ensure social sustainability and quality of life, both of which are crucial for the present and for an inclusive and collaborative world in the future. These basic conditions will enable this vulnerable social group to escape poverty, break down barriers and achieve a productive life as full citizens.

A sustainable city is a resilient, thriving and smart place to live (FGV Projetos, 2018; Arcadis, 2018; ICLEI, 2018; Giffinger et al., 2007; Gupta and Vegelin, 2016), whose citizens are healthy, educated and productive, living in harmony, collaborating and realizing self-fulfilling activities. So much still needs to be done to achieve this, and quickly. Personal backgrounds matter greatly when it comes to any kind of opportunity for development for persons with disabilities. In a context of great disparities, the four pillars of lifelong learning can guide governments, stakeholders and the population in general to support cities in becoming more inclusive, resilient and safe places to live and to learn for all; places that embrace citizens and offer valuable opportunities throughout life.

## Conclusion and recommendations

Having elaborated on a coherent, theoretical framework for persons with disabilities, one wherein accessibility, inclusion, lifelong learning and the concepts of reasonable accommodation and universal design are addressed as major issues for building sustainable, resilient cities for all, the following recommendations are given.

In writing this chapter, the authors identified and consulted a number of official international documents, papers and videos from different countries. In the 20-plus years since the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain (UNESCO and MEC, 1994), international and national guidelines and reports, governments, education systems, academics, NGOs and

companies have incorporated inclusivity into their documents, but there is still much to be done to make inclusion happen in real life. A good example of this tendency to circulate ideas and principles is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (UN, 1948): its 30 concise articles are still mentioned today, and it is considered one of the most commonly referenced texts in the world, alongside numerous other international documents, treaties, conventions, guidelines and papers from the UN. The UDHR is a milestone document. Drafted by representatives from all regions of the world, it set a ‘common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations’ (ibid., p. 1) and fundamental human rights to be universally protected. It has since been translated into over 500 languages.<sup>95</sup>

Extensive document production worldwide has resulted in thousands of pages on the rights of groups of people whose rights have been and continue to be violated. While we can agree that there has been progress in terms of respect for human rights in the 70-plus years since Salamanca, we cannot overlook the fact that the world has changed immeasurably since 1948. In 1951,<sup>96</sup> the world population was around 2.5 billion, with a population density of only 17 people/km<sup>2</sup>; today, there are over 7.8 billion people on the planet (Worldometer, 2021).

The process of economy globalization pushed forward by the technological revolution led to relevant world events, during which the political, economic and academic international communities – with power – have gathered to define steps for the incorporation in their agendas of people from minority backgrounds – without power – because this large human population should be prepared to respond to their interests and demands arising from the information era, globalization and the society of knowledge (Ferreira, 2015, p. 301, author’s translation).

The representatives of the 155 UNESCO Member States who attended the 2008 UNESCO International Conference on Education, the theme of which was ‘Inclusive education: The way of the future’, reaffirmed that:

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95 See <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/SearchByLang.aspx> [Accessed 26 September 2021].

96 From 1951, the world’s population was counted annually.

inclusive education [is] an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination (UNESCO, 2008, p. 3).

This acknowledgement repeats what history has already deemed ineffective, for it neither touches the very core of reality regarding the diversity in countries' education systems nor does it reflect the real-life and educational experiences of persons with disabilities or the discriminatory culture, obsolete policies and practices in schools.

In this chapter, we – the authors – have chosen to go beyond the current official discourse by bringing themes to light that have been addressed for decades by the UN; in doing so, we found two main challenges that stand out:

*People with disabilities' presence and voices are too often absent.*

Many persons with disabilities remain invisible and silent. They lack the resources and access to take part in the discourse that affects them. Immersed in poverty and at the margins of society, they are prevented from participating and contributing to decision-making processes concerning their lives, needs and demands. This finding is the reason behind our choice to present stories from real people. Sustainable cities that are inclusive and that promote lifelong learning can no longer just 'negotiate', they must ensure the presence of voices of members of this social group in every level of planning.

According to UNESCO (1994), the 'principle of inclusion', as discussed earlier on in this chapter, should guide education systems, schools and organizations to fully welcome and embrace every student, regardless of differences: social, cultural and economic background; individual characteristics; abilities or disabilities; sexual orientation or any other difference that stands out from the considered-equal majority. After many years of debate and a search for common ground with disability activists, the CRPD re-

'Sustainable cities that are inclusive and that promote lifelong learning can no longer just "negotiate", they must ensure the presence of voices of members of this social group in every level of planning.'

affirms that ‘despite these various instruments and undertakings, persons with disabilities continue to face barriers in their participation as equal members of society and violations of their human rights in all parts of the world’ (UN, 2006, p. 2). It is therefore crucial to emphasize ‘the importance of mainstreaming disability issues as an integral part of relevant strategies of sustainable development’ (ibid., p. 1).

### *General principles for lifelong learning in sustainable, inclusive cities*

The following general principles orientate the process of developing sustainable cities, and the main conclusions and recommendations that follow support the development of inclusive, equitable and sustainable cities that promote lifelong learning for all citizens, including those with disabilities.

- Facilitate the effective participation – not just the presence – of people with disabilities and their organizations, and ensure the availability of resources to enable the participation under equal conditions of people with disabilities.
- Eliminate the invisibility of people with disabilities in society by breaking down barriers and prioritizing their demands and needs.
- Deem accessibility a principle and a right of persons with disabilities.
- Assess and review cities’ initiatives, actions and public policies flexibly according to progress and emerging demands.
- Value the experiences, expertise and voices of persons with disabilities.
- Cities should learn from each other (to avoid ‘reinventing the wheel’).
- Protect and de-naturalize violence against people with disabilities, with particular attention to children.

### **Conclusion 1. People with disabilities remain at the margins of society.**

Disability remains a marginal issue despite advocacy by UN agencies, international organizations, governments, and conventions and calls for action published since the CRPD in 2006 and the WHO’s *World Report on Disability* in 2011. This means that the needs and demands of the large, worldwide disabled population have mostly remained ignored and neglected by those who have power.

**Recommendation 1.1: Fight exclusion**

Sustainable cities must identify barriers and fight exclusionary events, processes and procedures. If this does not happen, people with disabilities cannot access basic learning opportunities and they will never be in a position to access lifelong learning.

**Recommendation 1.2: Reduce poverty**

In sustainable cities, policy-makers must reflect on and create social allowance and financial programmes for people with disabilities and their families to access resources at low-interest rates or free from charges, so they can buy a house, car, disability devices (wheelchair, hearing aids, computer software, assistive technology), pay medical insurance, receive treatments, etc. Persons with disabilities must be involved as stakeholders in the drafting of these programmes.

**Recommendation 1.3: Listen to people with disabilities.**

Cities should encourage studies and small-scale research that adopts qualitative methodologies for listening to the voices of disabled people in different regions and cities within the same country. Higher education institutions should partner with the city to achieve this goal. Academics with disabilities must be identified and engaged in this process.

**Recommendation 1.4: Define the concept of 'exclusion'.**

International documents and scholarly production tend to focus on the concept of 'inclusion'. The concept of exclusion remains in the background of inclusive policy, movements and approaches; however, to promote inclusion, it is necessary to fight exclusion. A clearer comprehension of the concept of exclusion is therefore urgent because it materializes in the real lives of people with disabilities, i.e. someone experiences exclusion (who?), in a certain way (how?), in a particular place (where?), and for a particular reason (why?). The concept of exclusion still requires a theoretical and methodological framework that helps cities define strategies that really work for people with disabilities; thus, a city's guidelines and policies should clarify the strategies with real examples.

## **Conclusion 2. People with disabilities experience systematic violation of their rights.**

### **Recommendation 2.1: Combat attitudinal barriers.**

An inclusive city must combat discrimination and prejudice, humiliation and violence against people from vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities. International and/or national campaigns are not enough because they reach a small proportion of the population – they do not reach the poor and, when they do, they are ignored in favour of what are considered more urgent concerns. On top of this, the amount of information about persons with disabilities that is shared on social media is not enough to raise the proper awareness of their needs.

### **Recommendation 2.2: Give special attention to multiple vulnerabilities.**

Special attention should be given to people with disabilities combined with other differences that generates even more attitudinal barriers, such as gender, race, sexual identity or criminal history, among others.

### **Recommendation 2.3: Encourage studies on violence against people with disabilities.**

So far, there has been little investigation into this issue. A sustainable city committed to an inclusive culture should encourage scientific research addressing these issues so that the evidence can provide relevant knowledge to implement more effective strategies to combat them.

## **Conclusion 3. We must embrace the motto ‘Nothing about us without us’ in guidelines and public policy.**

Like the poor, children, youth, adults and older people with disabilities are not heard. An inclusive lifelong learning city should create an effective and systematic ‘hearing system’ (i.e. ombudsmen), run by people with disabilities.

### **Recommendation 3.1: Develop effective strategies to hear disabled members of the public of all ages.**

Cities should create a range of ‘hearing sectors’ within sustainable city governments, institutions and companies, run by people with disabilities trained for this purpose. They can join, for instance, a team in charge of receiving clients’ complaints or listening to customers (e.g. a customer service for the disabled community or a special secretariat for people with disabilities or a community centre for people with disabilities). Acknowledging the demands of this social group and then making the effort to respect and protect their rights are crucial steps in building a sustainable lifelong learning city.

### **Conclusion 4. Aggregate relevant information to improve well-being and quality of life.**

Much has been studied and published on people with disabilities; however, despite the relevance of much of this work, it is scattered across different sectors, websites, videos, documents, reports, papers, social media content, etc. Data disaggregation makes it difficult to create more effective documentation because the multiplicity of issues concerning this social group requires communication and connection between sectors. This requires a more consistent synchronicity among city sectors, leading to combined actions.

Recommendation 4.1 Create an observatory of the rights of persons with disabilities in cities, run by local activists.

There are numerous initiatives for people with disabilities around the world. They are commonly initiated by parents of children with disabilities, adults, professionals or teachers. All have the same goal: promoting the rights of people with different kinds of disabilities. These initiatives and experiences – many of them very successful – should be shared, systematized and disseminated.

### **Recommendation 4.2 Create ‘interactive centres’ in cities to support families, children, youth, adults and older people with disabilities, run by qualified professionals with disabilities.**

The nature of the centre should be interactive, open and agile so that people with disabilities can communicate with qualified and



experienced professionals, using a helpline to obtain guidance or gain specific information about a particular need. For instance, if a family that has a child with a functional disability moves to a new city or neighbourhood, they need to know about schools and recreational activities close by. A youth could share an experience of being bullied at school. Activities run by this centre would increase the credibility of the cities' commitment to and efforts towards building an inclusive culture.

Accessibility is a principle and a right – yet, in spite of its social importance for ensuring inclusion and lifelong learning for all, the concept of accessibility has not yet been fully understood, explored and incorporated in international official documents as a core principle and tool for implementation. The consequence of this neglect is that international guidelines on accessibility are still presented superficially as basic norms to ensure mostly physical accessibility. This overlooks multiple areas of application in the real lives of those with disabilities. Rather than implementing isolated policies and actions that are theoretically unfounded, cities should take an inclusive lifelong learning approach to development and should promote an integrated strategy that benefits people and society as a whole (Berman Bieler, 2008), and values and incorporates the contributions of all stakeholders equally, including people with disabilities. Participation, collaboration, transparency and accountability make sense socially, politically and economically.

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# Chapter 5

## → Education inclusion of refugees and migrants at the local level

### Introduction

In an era of profound demographic, socio-economic and technological changes, migration and forced displacement are top policy concerns. People move across or within countries for different reasons. Irregular migration and forced displacement are often related to crises, armed conflicts and natural disasters. The people engaged in such journeys often live at the margins of societies, start a never-ending trip, and are very vulnerable to the risk of exclusion and segregation in many areas, including education. Yet, education plays a key role in their lives.

Expanding access to, providing and funding quality education can improve the lives of both movers and non-movers while also boosting development and economic growth in origin, transit and destination areas. The relation between migration/displacement and education is in fact multi-faceted and affects ‘those who move, those who stay, those who host migrants and refugees and those who may do so’ (UNESCO, 2018, p. 4).

In line with the Education 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, inclusive and quality education should leave no one behind. People with migrant backgrounds and the forcibly

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displaced are among those at highest risk in this respect. Acknowledging the diversity of their needs is a step in the direction to include them in education, but it is not enough. Responding to those needs involves actions and interventions in all components of the education systems. It calls for coordination among actors operating at different levels of government, creating a complex set of interactions and responsibilities. This applies even more so at the city level, which represents the final destinations for most of the people that move worldwide.

How migrants and refugees integrate into urban and local communities varies from city to city depending on many factors, but typically on the capacity of local actors to decide which actions should be implemented and how to implement them, and on the funding available. Looking into some of these factors, this chapter examines to what extent cities and, more generally, local actors effectively answer to the educational needs of migrant and refugees at all ages while aligning, for example, with the vision behind the UNESCO learning city initiative (UIL, 2021). At the same time, it considers the challenges that both forcibly displaced people and immigrants face to access education and explores the vast opportunities that such initiatives can bring when educational inclusion takes place.

### **Integration through and in education is essential to build inclusive societies**

Integration in the place of settlement depends on many factors, including political will of the government, cultural and colonial histories, and financial and human capacities. Moreover, countries deal differently with citizenship, naturalization and residency, all of which influence duration of settlement, types of inflows and the future prospects of individuals in the country. According to MIPEX (Migrant Integration Policy Index), for example, there is a large variety across the 52 countries covered by the index.<sup>97</sup> Developed across eight policy areas, including education, health,

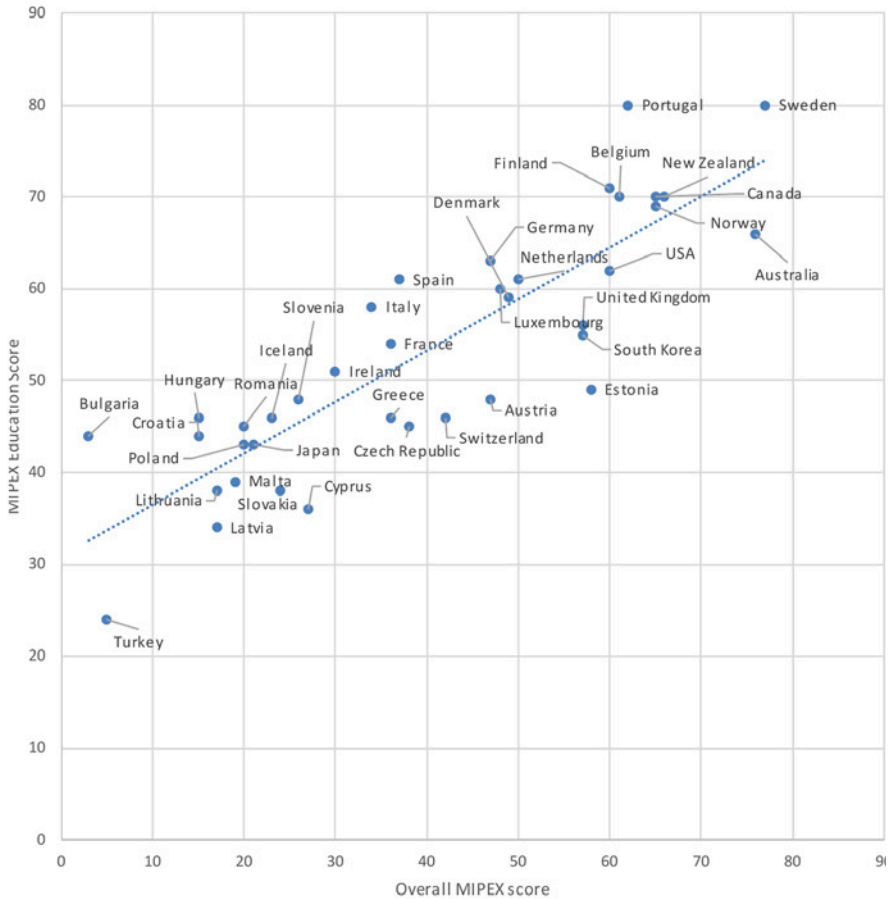
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<sup>97</sup> See <https://www.mipex.eu/> [Accessed 28 September 2021]

employment, and access to nationality and political participation, the overall index ranges between 80 in Portugal and Sweden to 24 in Turkey. The score varies between 0 and 100, with a value of 80 to 100 indicating a favourable environment and 0 to 10 being critically unfavourable (Huddleston et al., 2015).

The dimension of education measured by the index is not just newcomers' level of education – characteristics and components of the education system influencing inclusion and equity matter too. To measure integration in education, MIPEX considers four domains: (1) access to education; (2) the possibility for all pupils to benefit from opportunities that immigrants bring into schools (languages, culture, diversity); (3) entitlement for migrant parents, children and their teachers to have needs addressed in schools; and (4) support to learn and work together in a diverse society for all pupils and teachers. Looking then at the relation between MIPEX overall and the education dimension, a strong positive relation emerges (**Figure 7**), suggesting that countries scoring favourably on the education dimension also score well in the overall integration index. Schools and other educational institutions can thus play a big role in helping people with migrant backgrounds and the forcibly displaced to overcome barriers they face, and also in opening up opportunities to them. Responding to their needs would help the forcibly displaced to overcome difficulties, increase resilience, process information, settle in and integrate into societies and, more generally, to foster their inclusion.

'Schools and other educational institutions can thus play a big role in helping people with migrant backgrounds and the forcibly displaced to overcome barriers they face, and also in opening up opportunities to them.'



**Figure 7.** Positive relationship between educational and overall integration of immigrants.

Source: Author, based on MIPEX data (Huddlesiton et al., 2015)

All individuals, irrespective of their nationality, citizenship, race, sex, ability, etc., should be entitled to a public education in the city in which they reside. In particular, as the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report 2019 (UNESCO, 2018) recommended, governments should include migrants and forcibly displaced people in national education systems. Everyone has a right to education as established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, which argued that education should be free and

compulsory at the elementary levels and ‘directed to the full development of the human personality’ (UNESCO, 1948, Article 26). Ensuring all learners have access to quality education recognizes the importance of diversity and respect for human dignity (UNESCO, 2015b).

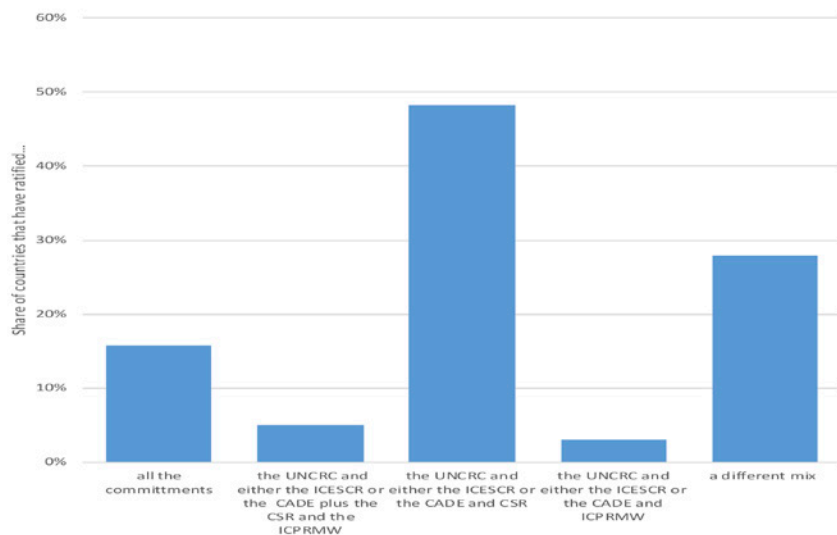
But a right to education, even when it exists (**Box 8**), does not imply equity or inclusion by itself. The barriers to education faced by the hardest-to-reach, including migrants and forcibly displaced people, are complex, interconnected and mutually reinforcing (UNESCO, 2018).

**Box 8. Few countries have a high level of commitment to the right to education of migrants**

Many soft and hard instruments protect and guarantee the right to education for specific groups, provide for non-discrimination and foster diversity. Concerning refugees, a comprehensive normative framework is defined at international level by the 1951 Refugee Convention (UNGA, 1950), which, along with the 1967 Protocol (UNGA, 1966), guarantees and regulates their right to education. A unified framework does not exist for migrants or internally displaced persons (IDPs).

If human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination are crucial, the international normative framework for the right to education of migrants is very fragmented and lacks coordination (Right to Education Initiative, 2018). Out of 196 countries, about half (48 per cent) have ratified *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)* and either the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)* or the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (CADE) plus the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (CSR)*. In fact, only 16 per cent are highly committed to the right to education of migrants, having ratified all six most relevant treaties, and only 3 per cent of countries have ratified the *UNCRC* and either the *ICESCR* or the CADE, plus the UN Migrant Workers Convention (ICRMW). Just 5 per cent have ratified the *UNCRC*

and either the *ICESCR* or the *CADE*, plus the *CSR* and the *ICRMW* (*ibid.*).<sup>98</sup>



**Figure 8.** Few countries have a high level of commitment to the right to education of migrants.

Source: Based on *Right to Education Initiative* (2018)

Displacement and migration flows bring cultural, linguistic and historical diversity with them, among other aspects, but can also fuel discrimination and xenophobia. This happens even where migration and education policies protect the right to education, challenging their chances of inclusion in and out of schools.

Despite the potential role of schools as places of integration and socialization, the dominant culture is often privileged, eroding foreigners' original culture and challenging integration processes that take place in and out of the school. Especially during crises, when anxiety and uncertainty are heightened, people may feel drawn to those with whom they closely identify, developing stereotypical and prejudiced perceptions of migrants or refugees, which lead to discrimination. This, in turn, generates conflict-

<sup>98</sup> See also UNESCO (2019)

ing situations between the educational system and immigrant students, and shape attitudes towards migrants that also affect their own self-perception and sense of belonging (UNESCO, 2018). Such tensions lead also to processes of exclusion and segregation, with migrants and refugees educated in separated settings or in settings in which they form a majority (ibid.).

### **Integration is multidimensional and is different from inclusion**

Integration implies mobilizing multiple dimensions that matter in individuals' lives. Education in particular is a powerful determinant of employment opportunities, culture and social networks. Integration of people with migrant backgrounds and forcibly displaced people in society and in education recognizes the need to 'integrate to the different' (Poon-McBrayer, 2012). When it is successful, integration contributes to the host countries in several ways, but it also presents numerous challenges, because migrants and forcibly displaced people are heterogeneous groups with respect to their origins, skills and cultural backgrounds. But integration is not enough. Integration accepts or integrates parts of the culture of the newcomers in the system so that they are more tolerated or respected. It is still the individual with diverse needs who is asked to adapt to the existing system, and not vice versa. By contrast, inclusion respects the rights and responds to the needs of all those

**'Inclusion respects the rights and responds to the needs of all those who are part of it, creating a space in which diversity is celebrated and valued. Addressing diversity fully calls for inclusion.'**

who are part of it, creating a space in which diversity is celebrated and valued. Addressing diversity fully calls for inclusion.

With respect to education, the concern for inclusion and equity in and through education has existed for decades. In 1990, the *World Declaration on Education for All and a Framework for Action: Meeting Basic Learning Needs*, adopted in Jomtien, Thailand, spelled out the need for universal access to education and for equity (UNESCO, 1990). Article III stated that ‘an active commitment must be made to removing educational disparities’, mentioning

underserved groups: the poor; street and working children; rural and remote populations; nomads and migrant workers; indigenous peoples; ethnic, racial, and linguistic minorities; refugees; those displaced by war; and people under occupation, should not suffer any discrimination in access to learning opportunities (ibid., p. 5).

Just a few years later, in 1994, in Salamanca, Spain, the World Conference on Special Needs Education was a major impetus for inclusive education. *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* recognized ‘the need to work towards “schools for all” – institutions which include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs’ (UNESCO and MEC, 1994, p. iii). The approach helped shift the focus from the learner to the system, recognizing that schools would need to be restructured ‘in order to respond to the needs of all children’ (Ainscow, 1995). An inclusive education system ‘can only be created if ordinary schools ... become better at educating all children in their communities’ (UNESCO, 2009). Attention shifted from special education to diversity as a value to be served through a whole-school approach. Closing the decade, the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, ‘in response to a growing consensus’, acknowledged that ‘all children have the right to a common education in their locality regardless of their background, attainment or disability’ (UNESCO, 2000, p. 18).

This vision of education is shared by the 2015 Incheon Declaration:

'Inclusion and equity in and through education is the cornerstone of a transformative education agenda, and we therefore commit to addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes. No education target should be considered met unless met by all. We therefore commit to making the necessary changes in education policies and focusing our efforts on the most disadvantaged, especially those with disabilities, to ensure that no one is left behind' (UNESCO, 2015a, p. 7).

The vision of leaving no one behind permeates the Education 2030 Agenda and SDG 4, where it pledges to ensure 'inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', resting on the assumption that every child, youth and adult matter equally and deserve the same opportunities and experiences irrespective of their physical, mental, biological, environmental and socio-cultural endowments (UNESCO, 2016, p. 7). This view involves a range of elements that form educational experiences and outcomes, including the content of education and learning materials, teaching and teacher preparation, infrastructure and the learning environment, community norms and space for dialogue, and criticism among all stakeholders (GEMR, 2019a).

As with the concepts of integration and inclusion, a misunderstanding emerges with respect to the terms 'multicultural' and 'intercultural', often used without distinction in the description of national education policies. However, based on the *UNESCO Guidelines for Intercultural Education*, 'multicultural education uses learning about other cultures ... to produce acceptance', while intercultural education reflects the aspiration to find a 'way of living together in multicultural societies through ... understanding of, respect for and dialogue between the different cultural groups' (UNESCO, 2006, p. 18). Multiculturalism can be associated with integration, denoting a two-way process requiring some adjustments by both parties, e.g. the newcomers and the local residents or the cultural minority and the cultural majorities. Interculturalism emphasizes both integration and social inclusion instead. It



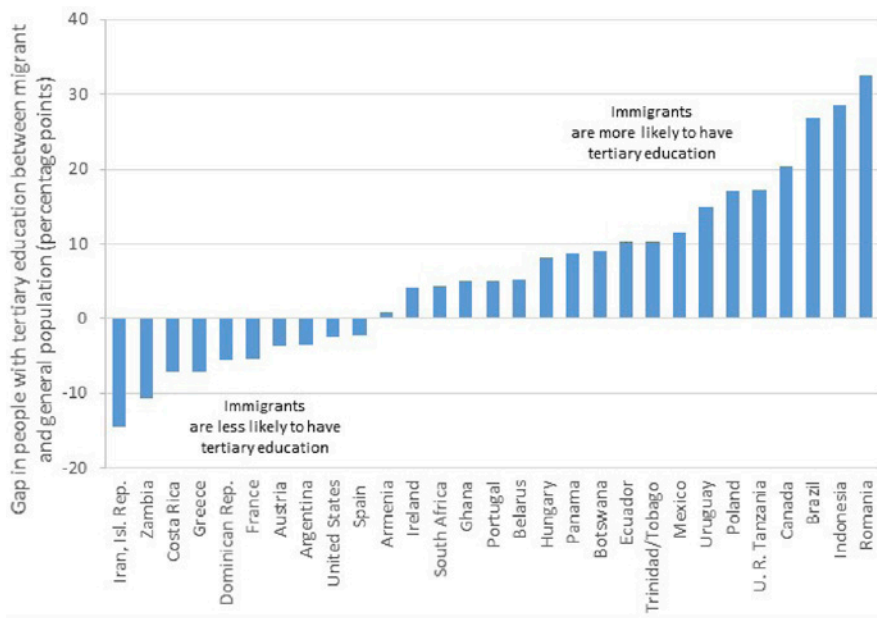
fosters knowledge of other cultures but is also concerned with the structural inequalities faced often by members of minority groups and involves taking steps to eliminate systematic educational disadvantage (Barrett, 2014). With respect to interculturalism, diversity becomes the norm and not a special situation (Santerini, 2010).

### Immigrants and the forcibly displaced are often at disadvantage in education

Despite the fact that education is a basic human right, immigrants, the forcibly displaced and their children are more likely to lag behind natives in education. As the GEM Report for 2019, 'Building bridges, not walls' (UNESCO, 2018) has shown, such disadvantage is complex. Only 50 per cent of refugee children have access to primary education and less than 1 per cent attend college, compared to a 34 per cent level globally (UNHCR, 2016). Concerning immigrants, they differ in characteristics both easily observed (e.g. education) and harder to observe (e.g. motivation), both of which influence migration. The likelihood to emigrate is higher for the more educated, as they are able to gather more information, respond to economic opportunities, utilize transferable skills and finance emigration. The more educated are also more likely to migrate to countries with selective immigration policies. From 2008 to 2012, 41 per cent of US immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa had at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 28.5 per cent of other immigrants. Those from Nigeria (61 per cent), South Africa (57 per cent), Kenya (47 per cent) and Ghana (35 per cent) were the most educated (Ogunwole, Battle and Cohen, 2017). However, some migration flows concern individuals from poorer neighbouring countries with lower educational attainment, e.g. Albania to Greece, Haiti to the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua to Costa Rica (**Figure 9**).<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> See also [https://gitvfd.github.io/migrants\\_integration\\_in\\_regions/](https://gitvfd.github.io/migrants_integration_in_regions/)



**Figure 9.** *Immigrants’ education status depends on context: Gap in share of migrant and native tertiary graduates, selected countries, 2009–2015*  
 Source: UNESCO (2018)

Migrants’ educational attainment at time of emigration also varies by the conditions under which they cross borders. US migrants from El Salvador, Haiti, Mexico and Nicaragua without proper documentation had fewer years of education on average, compared to those on a visitor visa or who became legal residents (UNESCO, 2018). Socio-economic disadvantage also hinders chances and opportunities through and in education; however, migrants’ and forcibly displaced people’s educational attainment and outcomes vary also according to their country of origin. For example, among the countries covered by the Mexican Migration Project,<sup>100</sup> educational attainment varies from a low of six years of completed education in Mexico to a high of 15 years of education in Peru (ibid.). Demographic characteristics (such as gender and age of arrival in the country) and the language spoken at home

100 The Mexican Migration Project (MMP) was created in 1992 to explore the complex process of Mexican migration to the United States of America. See <https://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/> [Accessed 29 September 2021].

matter tremendously too, as does age. But other factors, including the characteristics of education systems and their ability to respond to education needs and provide quality education to all, are equally relevant.

In Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries,<sup>101</sup> immigrant students are nearly twice as likely as natives to repeat a grade (OECD, 2018a). Moreover, analysis based on the 2007–2013 Student Panel Survey in France showed that 15 per cent of children of French parents repeated at least one primary grade, compared to 27 per cent of children of immigrants from southern Asian countries or western African countries along the Gulf of Guinea, and 32 per cent of children of immigrants from Turkey or western African countries in the Sahel (Ichou, 2018). Similarly, first-generation immigrant students in Spain are at almost twice the risk of repeating a primary grade than natives (Gonzalez-Betancor and Lopez-Puig, 2016). Inclusion in education becomes effective when education systems can respond to the diversity of their learners' needs, irrespective of their background and ability. Managing to do so is essential to create inclusive societies and commit to social cohesion.

'Inclusion in education becomes effective when education systems can respond to the diversity of their learners' needs, irrespective of their background and ability.'

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101 For a full list of OECD countries, visit <https://www.oecd.org/about/document/ratification-oecd-convention.htm> [Accessed 29 September 2021].

Migrants and refugees increasingly live in urban settings. According to the 2018 *World Urbanization Prospects* (UNDESA, 2018), more than half of the global population now lives in urban settings. This share is expected to continue increasing from 55 per cent in 2018 to 60 per cent in 2030, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) (UNDESA, 2018). By 2050, the urban population will triple in Africa and will increase by 60 per cent in Asia (ibid.), implying that the two continents alone will be home to the majority of the world's population. These countries are also home to the larger shares of IDPs and refugees worldwide (UNESCO, 2018).

The increase in urbanization is not only influenced by population changes but also by the inflows of migrants and refugees, whose movements, either voluntary or forced, have increased substantially in recent years. The number of international migrants has more than tripled, from around 75 million in 1964 to 258 million in 2017, though its percentage in the population has increased only slightly (UNESCO, 2018). The number of internal migrants, though less often mentioned, averages 713 million or three times that of international migrants, according to the most recent estimates (Bernard, Bell and Cooper, 2018). Today, the largest internal population movements occur in LMICs, particularly China and India. In 2016, about 77 million Chinese migrant workers moved to find work in another province, 93 million moved within their province, and 112 million short-distance migrants worked in cities close to their regions (Hannum, Hu and Shen, 2018)Scientific and Cultural Organization. About 80 per cent of seasonal migrant children in seven Indian cities lacked access to education near work sites, and 40 per cent worked, experiencing abuse and exploitation (Aide et Action, UNESCO and BvLF, 2015). There are also 82 million displaced people in the world: 26 million refugees, 4 million asylum-seekers and 48 million internally displaced due to conflict (UNHCR, 2021).

According to a recent estimate, almost one in five people born abroad live in the largest cities, and at least 20 per cent of the inhabitants of those cities aged at least 18 years are internation-

al migrants. Estimates based on a global dataset suggest that 22 metropolitan areas (including Abu Dhabi, Kuwait City, Madrid and Greater Johannesburg), accounting for nearly 20 per cent of foreign-born people, have above 1 million foreign-born residents (Columbian College of Arts and Science, 2019). In Tokyo, one in eight new adults (who turned 20 years old between 2017 and 2018) has a foreign background (Yoshida, 2018). As of December 2015, the number of foreign children under 19 years old was 288,749, representing 12.9 per cent of the total registered foreign population (Tokunaga, 2018). Besides migrants, forcibly displaced people often find refuge in urban settings; for example, around 60 per cent of the total refugee population lives in cities and urban areas and not in camps (Gaynor, 2018).

Movements towards the cities and sustained population growth have boosted the scale and number of slums across the globe. Moreover, the majority of the world's refugees flee to neighbouring countries where adequate infrastructure and access to basic services are poor. Ultimately, urban refugees end up living in slums, putting additional strain on local governments. It is estimated that about quarter of the world's urban population lives in slums (UN-Habitat, 2013). Analysis carried out for the GEM Report 2019 (UNESCO, 2018) has shown that 80 million more children will be living in slums by 2030, 50 million of which in sub-Saharan Africa. In Asia, the proportion of the urban population living in slums varies from 25 per cent in western Asia to 35 per cent in southern Asia. In Latin America and the Caribbean, slum prevalence is 24 per cent (UN-Habitat, 2013). Many of those settling in slums are not just internal migrants but also refugees and internally displaced people. And yet the provision of education in slums is poor (**Box 9**).

**Box 9. Movements to cities have fostered the growth of slums where provision of education is poor.**

At least 800 million people live in slums, many of whom are rural-to-urban migrants and forcibly displaced people, often lacking access to basic services, including public education. Education outcomes, along with dropout rates and attendance,

are heavily affected by the fear of eviction and by resettlement. In Bangladesh in 2016, the rate of secondary school-aged adolescents out of school was twice as high in slums as in other urban areas. Two Nairobi slum surveys showed that the percentage of women with at least some secondary education increased from 32 per cent in 2000 to 51 per cent in 2012, but the city average was 68 per cent.

The lack of sufficient government schools in slums has led to provision by non-government organizations and private actors. In Kibera, the largest slum in Nairobi, Kenya, for example, an open mapping project found 330 schools, while the official estimate was 100. Private schools in four low-income areas of Kampala, Uganda, accounted for 84 per cent of pre-primary to secondary enrolment, while more than 40 per cent of migrants and other residents in two informal settlements in Nairobi were enrolled in private schools between 2003 and 2010. Such private schools tend to be poorly regulated and employ untrained educators, affecting the opportunities to obtain a quality education.

Securing dweller tenure and establishing rights are key steps towards education provision, as governments are often reluctant to invest in education infrastructure for people who settled on land they did not own. In Argentina, for example, access to land titling was associated with long-term education improvement. Rigid registration and documentation requirements also often hinder migrant participation in social protection programmes that could benefit their education. In Kenyan slums, a recent urban social protection programme required national identification, thus precluding the 5 per cent of preselected recipients who were refugees, unable to prove Kenyan nationality or from child-headed households.

*Source:* UNESCO (2018)

The resources and capacity to respond to educational needs also depend on where migrants and refugees reside. People location patterns in a city depend on several factors, such as land value, proximity to schools, jobs, networks of similar nationalities, opportunities to work, laws and policies. These factors also

influence integration and eventual social inclusion. While more than half of international migrants resided in 10 high-income countries in 2017 (Europe and Northern America having the lion's share), six countries hosted 61 per cent of the world's 40 million people internally displaced due to conflict. The Syrian Arab Republic leads the list with 6.8 million, including 2.9 million newly displaced in 2017. Numbers of new IDPs also surged in 2017 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq and Sudan. In addition, of the 18.8 million people internally displaced due to natural disasters, 68 per cent lived in six countries, led by China with 4.5 million.

Several obstacles challenge the education inclusion of immigrants and forcibly displaced people. As the *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education – Building Bridges, not Walls* has shown, education is a pivotal factor in the lives of people on the move and of people with migrant backgrounds. When they are given the opportunities, migrants and forcibly displaced people make important contributions to society through employment, entrepreneurship and cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2018). Intense migration and urbanization foster diversity in cultural, socio-economic and religious traits, influencing the social fabric of urban areas – yet a range of barriers, and a mixture of supply and demand factors, make their inclusion in education rarely a reality. Integration in cities is not easy for the most vulnerable: they often live in precariousness, are confronted with xenophobia, discrimination and violence (Dryden-Petersen, 2006), and are spatially or educationally segregated.

According to a report by the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2017) primary and secondary education of migrants was mentioned as a significant challenge by 15 cities in the world. The majority among them mentioned the lack of language skills as a challenge for integration (Amsterdam, Athens, Berlin, Boston, Calgary, Guangzhou, Rotterdam and São Paulo). When immigrants and forcibly displaced people cannot access basic services including education, they miss opportunities to live a decent life. Typical obstacles include lack of coordination mechanisms across the different

levels of government and sectors, weak governance, insufficient human and financial capacity, lack of documentation, affordability, cultural barriers and attitudes, language or lack of recognition of prior qualifications and learning (UNESCO, 2018). For example, the Government of India guarantees access to national education to all children, including child refugees and asylum seekers; however, in some geographical areas, they face barriers to access educational services because some local government authorities request specific documents, which are often almost only available to Indian nationals (such as the Adhaar card, a unique identification document issued to residents in India).

Based on a survey to organizations providing education in urban spaces to refugees, the following major challenges emerged: the unclear or lack of policy framework (54 per cent), lack of funding (50 per cent) and refugees' lack of legal status (50 per cent) (Mendenhall, Russell and Bruckner, 2017). Similarly, 10 of the cities interviewed for the 2017 World Economic Forum report were facing challenges in integrating migrants. This was the case especially where the inflow of forcibly displaced persons had been increasing rapidly (WEF, 2017). In Medellín, Colombia, for instance, 482,780 people (20 per cent of the city's population) are forcibly displaced. Moreover, according to a survey run by the Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI), among the 38 local governments from Iraq, Jordan, Turkey and Croatia, 58 per cent of respondents estimated that hosting refugees had a high impact in the municipality (CMI, 2017).

Besides representing opportunities for growth and development, influxes of refugees and migrants strain cities' resources. Refugees in particular, who are often dispersed in urban areas, can be very difficult to reach to provide services to. For example, while Turkey has committed to include all Syrian nationals in its national education system by 2020, the latter face big language barriers. At the central level, there is no provision of preparatory language classes for children seeking asylum who enter the education system in Turkey or have long periods of interrupted schooling. Despite access to Turkish classes provided by public education centres or



the municipalities in their assigned province or satellite city, such provision varies greatly from town to town.

Many countries have set up migration control policies to address too-rapid urbanization and large rural-urban migration flows. For example, based on a survey of 190 countries, 79 per cent had such policies over the previous five years (UNDESA, 2017). Registration systems like the 'Hukou' in China and 'Hộ Khẩu' in Viet Nam (Cameron, 2012) allow for limited access to services, including education, for migrants. In China, the system put migrants at a disadvantage in education access and quality despite having been reformed profoundly in recent years (Hannum, Hu and Shen, 2018). According to a report released in February 2019 on the integration of migrants in 50 Chinese cities, the average score of migrant integration across the dimensions of politics, economics, public service, and culture and psychology was 51.62 out of 100 (Chi, 2019). Less than four out of 10 of the migrants in the 50 cities could obtain permanent residence in the city in which they resided, and the barriers to migrants' integration most often mentioned were 'settlement difficulties'.

Competences and responsibilities in immigration and education matters do not often rest within the local levels. In some European cities, such as Berlin, Edinburgh, Hamburg, Oslo and Vienna, responsibility for all school and education matters rests fully with the city. In others, including Italian cities and some German cities such as Leipzig, Munich and Nuremberg, early childhood education (e.g. nursery and kindergarten) responsibility lies with the city, while it is shared with regional governments for school education and vocational training. In France, cities are responsible for early childhood and primary education, whereas the responsibility for lower secondary education (collèges) lies with intermediate government levels (départements), and that of secondary education and vocational education (TVET, lycées and enseignement professionnel) lies with the regions.

In federal countries, such as Australia, Austria, Canada and Germany, responsibilities for education are allocated at state, province or

regional levels. In other countries, autonomous communities (e.g. in Spain), prefectures (e.g. in Japan) or provinces (e.g. in Argentina) liaise at the central/regional and local level. In Finland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Republic of Korea and Brazil, most educational issues are handled by local authorities. In Brazil, responsibilities for regulatory and administrative functions lie with the Conselho Municipal de Educação (Municipal Council of Education) and the local secretariats or departments of education. Each system is autonomous and hires personnel by means of competitive public examinations, and each manages their resources within certain rules and principles. The federal government, the state, the federal district and the municipalities must organize a yearly national plan to integrate actions aimed at the coordination and development of education at various levels.

In Denmark, Lithuania, Sweden and Slovakia, most issues related to education are managed at the local level, including the planning and the budgeting. In Sweden, local governments have been mandated to implement an introduction programme, a two-year programme by the National Employment Authority, with integration measures for refugees. This implies they have mandatory responsibilities for language, civic matters and public primary education. Sweden's capital, Stockholm, is going beyond its duties, however, by running actions in several areas to realize a cohesive city for all ages (OECD, Stockholms Stad and OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth, 2019). In Gothenburg, Malmö and the Finnish capital Helsinki, compulsory primary school and upper secondary school education, including vocational training, is handled directly by the city authorities. They are responsible for adult education, including, in Gothenburg, the language course 'Swedish for Immigrants' (SFI) (ibid.)

Even when cities have no responsibilities in education matters, the local administrations are involved directly in the inclusion of refugees in mainstream education or activities to promote quality education opportunities (UCLG, 2017, 2019a). For example, in Tangier, Kingdom of Morocco, the municipal charter defines the city's

responsibilities, yet it does not delegate migration issues (ICMPD, UCLG and UN-HABITAT, 2017). Moreover, education, employment, health and housing do not fall under the specific responsibility of the municipality; only under specific conditions and for some aspects can these responsibilities be shared with the state or be transferred by the state to the city. Yet Tangier tries to put mechanisms in place to advance migration issues through the mayor's office and the cultural affairs department. Because children of immigrants face many challenges to access schools, the city supports the action of NGOs in this area.

Meanwhile, in Riga, Latvia, while the state is responsible for the education of asylum seekers, responsibilities are shared between the state and the city once they are granted refugee status (Eurocities, 2017). In Turkey, the responsibility for immigration matters rests with the central government and is implemented at the sub-national level by the governorate. Municipalities have no specific areas of responsibility for foreigners' integration matters and the specific support offered varies greatly (Betts, Ali and Memişoğlu, 2019). In New York, USA, provision of public health, education and safety services falls under city law for all residents, regardless of immigration status (WEF, 2017). In Armenia, the responsibility for inclusive schools lies with the local government authorities or the department of education within the municipalities (as, for example, in the country's capital, Yerevan). The latter is responsible for both the budget lines and the training of teachers (GEMR, 2019a).

Municipalities can take proactive measures to integrate refugees and migrants in their territories – for example, they can start political debate on some issues and make public statements about their readiness for public action. In some instances, cities faced with humanitarian urgency have decided to give refuge and protection to the most vulnerable migrants and to increase the number of those they can receive. This was the case, for example, in Altena, Germany, which took in one-third more refugees than it was assigned in 2015. The town also launched an internet search portal to help the refugees find jobs and connect them with other citizens of the town (Dockery, 2018). The tension in migration mat-

ters is especially high when it comes to integrating undocumented migrants. In the opinion of the German federal courts, municipalities have only a municipal mandate and no general political mandate, which means that the more they want to intervene in decision-making processes of federal and state governments, the less freedom they are granted (Heuser, 2019). In principle, however, certain policy areas can be considered as both a state and a local issue.

Local governments' mandates differ across countries, and planning and implementation processes differ as well. As the previous examples suggest, mandates also differ across issues and across countries. Planning and implementation processes likewise differ and render comparisons difficult. According to a recent review (UCLG, 2019b), coordination and collaboration both across levels or sectors of government and between institutions lag behind, making the implementation of the SDG agenda difficult. In parallel, the dialogue across levels on monitoring frameworks seldom involves local actors through participatory practices. While the SDGs require policy coherence for their realization, the review notes that local and regional governments are seldom involved in national coordination mechanisms. Just 49 out of the 143 countries reporting to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)<sup>102</sup> since 2016 have included local and regional governments in such mechanisms or have regularly consulted them. According to an OECD survey in several cities, less than 10 per cent of cities responding to the survey had a leading role in the education for migrants and refugees, 54 per cent of them shared their education competencies with other levels of government, and 15 per cent declared that such competencies resided at another level of government (OECD, Stockholms Stad and OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth, 2019, Table 1.1).

The small city of Altena, Germany, shares tasks with neighbouring municipalities that are members of the Märkischer Kreis

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102 The HLPF is the main United Nations platform on sustainable development and it has a central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level. See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf> [Accessed 29 September 2021].

district to provide services to its inhabitants. Examples of these shared tasks include the local immigration authority, job centre and the youth migration service (OECD, 2018b). The district's municipal integration center opened in late 2012 (Märkischer Kreis, 2019); its objectives and tasks are essentially to improve the educational opportunities of children and young people from immigrant families and to coordinate the diverse initiatives and projects in the field of integration. The legal basis for these services lies with the *Teilhabe- und Integrationsgesetz* (Participation and Integration Act) of the German State of North Rhine-Westphalia.

In Greece, the city of Athens has developed a large range of strategies to address the needs of migrants and refugees (OECD, 2018b). Among these is the Athens Coordination Center for Migrant and Refugee issues (ACCMR), which aims to foster coordination between the municipal authorities and different stakeholders operating within the city for the integration of migrants and refugees currently living in Athens. The ACCMR has been operating since June 2017 with the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, one of the world's leading private, international philanthropic organizations, as a founding donor and with the coordination of the Athens Partnership, a non-profit organization that promotes partnerships between the public and private sector, under the Vice-Mayor's Office for Migrants and Refugees. In February 2019, the city ratified a strategic action plan for the integration of migrants and refugees, as well as a 'preparedness and response mechanism' for the management of potential refugee crises (*ibid.*).

Other cities have developed strategies and models to better integrate refugees and migrants in their fabric. The city of Milan, Italy, has developed the Milan Resilience Strategy, prioritizing economic inclusion of young vulnerable residents such as migrants and asylum seekers. In Gdansk, Poland, the municipality developed the Gdansk Immigrant Integration Model, a programme that focuses on training, access to employment, education and language courses and is supported by the European Union and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. The municipality also launched

an Immigrant Council, made up of 13 advisers who regularly share their remarks and consult the mayor on issues concerning asylum seekers, refugees and migrants (Bergmann, 2018).

In São Paulo, Brazil, the Coordination Office for Migrant Policy (CPMIg) promotes dialogue between government, immigrants, trade union members, civil society organizations and academics. Thanks to improved coordination, it helped to realize the following actions, among others: the drafting of bill no. 143/2016 (Law 16,478 of 2016), establishing a municipal policy for the immigrant population (the bill is the result of the work of an intersectoral committee comprising 13 municipal government secretariats and 13 civil society organizations); the implementation of the National Programme of Access to Technical Education and Employment for Immigrants (PRONATEC – Immigrants); the training and sensitization of civil servants for the provision of qualified services to immigrants, with employees from the areas of health, social assistance, education and the Metropolitan Civil Guard; and the organization of the first Municipal Conference on Policies for Immigrants (ILO, 2017a).

Coordination in monitoring frameworks is quite rare. In Italy, which in 2016 had 8,006 municipalities, 110 provinces and 20 regions, the Italian Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (AICCRE) supports the realization of the SDGs at the local level. In 2018, during a side event at the HLPF, the first edition of the Venice City Solutions (AICCRE et al., 2018) took place. AICCRE co-organized the initiative with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) network, with the financial support of the European Union Commission Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (EU DG DEVCO). Among the issues that emerged during discussions were questions of competency: as decentralization processes are very heterogeneous across countries, there is a need to channel more resources directly to local governments to build multi-stakeholder strat-

egies involving the civil society and the private sector and to collect more and better data at the local level (ibid.). In Brazil, the National Confederation of Municipalities (CNM) strives to motivate its member to monitor regional development at the local level and to provide local indicators. To this end, municipalities are asked to use the 'Mandala tool' (UCLG and UNDP, 2018), which helps to visualize the process of development in four different dimensions: (1) economic, (2) social, (3) environmental and (4) institutional.

In Germany, a partnership between city associations and a large range of other actors, including foundations and academic scholars, developed the SDG Indicators for Municipalities along with an online platform to monitor progress in the realization of SDGs (<https://sdg-portal.de>). A similar initiative exists in Norway, where some municipalities worked with high-school students to choose six SDGs to prioritize (health, education, industry and infrastructure, sustainable cities and communities, climate, and partnerships). In Belgium, the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities has developed a set of local SDG indicators, accompanied by an explanatory manual (VVSG, 2019). Montreal, Canada, meanwhile, has developed the International Observatory of Mayors on Living Together to pool cities' experiences on issues of living together (WEF, 2017), while Calgary, in the west of the country, initiated the programme ReDirect, which uses education, awareness and intervention to prevent youth and young adults from becoming radicalized. Finally, Local Governments for Sustainability, an international network, comprises more than 1,750 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development: in sub-Saharan African, 113 municipalities are members of the network (ICLEI Africa, 2019).

The actions of local and sub-national governments in migration and displacement are increasingly recognized as crucial. Policies and laws about migration and its governances are mainly national prerogatives, yet local actors are essential partners, being the first to receive and support migrants and refugees. The lives of and inclusion opportunities for migrants and refugees are heavily

affected by what happens within the city or municipality in which they reside, and it is at the local level that they can access education, and find employment and network opportunities to become an active part of the societies in which they reside.

The report of the 2016 UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) recommended that national governments ‘adopt inclusive immigration policies, engage with cities as equal partners, provide funding to cities as primary actors in urban development, and help cities to mobilize resources to ensure that they have adequate funds to fulfil their responsibilities’ (UN-HABITAT, 2016). It emphasized the role of local authorities and ‘the important challenges of how cities, towns and villages can be planned and managed in order to fulfil their role as drivers of sustainable development, and how they can shape the implementation of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement on climate change’ (ibid.). This vision is present in the New Urban Agenda, adopted at Habitat III, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The former agenda is based on three pillars encompassing issues and priorities for cities; these are:

1. spatially-just resource distribution, i.e. resources are ‘accessible in both formal and informal sectors and areas.’ Resources here refer to education and equitable livelihoods, opportunities and decent jobs, which should be enjoyed over the whole life also by those most at risk of marginalization (e.g. young people, migrants and refugees, informal workers, and persons with disabilities);
2. political agency, to empower ‘all inhabitants (including the most vulnerable)’ to be social and political actors and exercise the full content and meaning of citizenship;
3. social, economic and cultural diversity to recognize ‘culture, neighbouring, and stakeholding as a lever for social cohesion, social capital, innovation, safer cities, self-expression, and identity’ (ibid. p. 8).

Cities are instrumental in creating social inclusion and realizing the ‘right to the city’ (Lefebvre, 2020). In Brazil, such a right has been enshrined in the City Statute of 2001, which regulates urban policy as specified in Articles 182 and 183 of the country’s

‘The lives of and inclusion opportunities for migrants and refugees are heavily affected by what happens within the city or municipality in which they reside.’



1988 constitution. In Ecuador, it has been operationalized in the national constitution. This right is a collective right and covers education. According to UN-Habitat (2017), the right to the city encompasses

all civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights as enshrined in existing international human rights treaties, covenants, and conventions. ... It calls for a universal, interdependent, and interrelated implementation to human rights' (p. 24).

Cities also have a fundamental role with respect to the Education 2030 Agenda: recognizing the importance of the local level to progress on the SDGs and to foster inclusion of the most vulnerable, cities are taking the lead to 'localize the SDGs' (i.e. to apply them to local contexts). In many instances, cities have taken the first steps to map their activities towards the SDGs and to use the goals as a comprehensive framework through which to assess progress. In such mapping, the 'urban boundary' matters crucially for the opportunities available for certain SDG targets, since government institutions at different levels operate within a city boundary.

Refugees' and migrants' education and their social inclusion are present in the transformative actions recommended by the New Urban Agenda according to the three pillars mentioned above. For example, under Pillar 2, the Transformative Action 2.5 lists among its key actions 'to fight prejudice against marginalized; acknowledge the contribution of migrants to local economy, culture, history, and value their identities as part of the city' and 'to implement city plans for migrants and refugees in terms of housing, education, as well as economic activities' (ibid. p. 39).

The need to recognize cities as key partners in migration issues was affirmed explicitly in a submission made to the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration in preparation for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) (UNGA, 2018). The letter, from the Global Policy Initiative at Colombia University, stated that

in the GCM, States should acknowledge the fundamental role of cities as key policy-makers and policy-implementers on migration, including by: (1) providing and/or facilitating operational support in building administrative capacities of cities to receive and to integrate; (2) establishing different funding arrangements to support cities in their work; (3) opening political access for city leaders to where national, regional and international policy is debated and shaped (Global Policy Initiative, 2017, p. 2).

Similarly, in the *Mechelen Declaration on Cities and Migration*, the result of a 2017 conference in Mechelen, Belgium, the signatories committed ‘to working with states at the local and regional level in providing inclusive and equitable quality education to migrants, especially migrant youth, and to provide access to life-long learning that help them acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society’ (UN-Habitat, 2017, p. 4). At the time of the GCM signing in Morocco in 2018, the Mechelen signatories – all mayors and leaders of local and regional governments – issued a second declaration to reaffirm their commitment, which was welcomed by the UNHCR.

To deal with global issues and challenges, networks of cities are being established around the world. A common feature of these networks is the search for solutions to make cities more sustainable, inclusive and to realize SDG 11, which calls on countries to ‘make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’ (UN DESA, 2021). In many cases, this search starts with better urban planning, and includes fostering connections between different sectors and actors, and developing urban spaces that are adapted to promote and support diversity.

Almost 30 years ago, in 1990, the term ‘educating city’ was coined at the first International Congress of Educating Cities in Barcelona, Spain. Four years later, the International Association of Educating Cities (IAEC) was established and the *Charter of Educating Cities* (IAEC, 2004) adopted. An ‘educating city’ sees the city as the source of education in all dimensions for all inhabitants – a vision to be supported by the municipal government and shared with civil society. Such a vision also calls for better coordination across

all departments of local administrations, different levels of government, and civil society.

The idea of an educating city was not new, as it was related to that of a learning society; yet, between 1992 and 2012, other related concepts emerged. One of these sees the city as an entity that provides different learning opportunities to its inhabitants to satisfy their learning needs; another sees the city as going beyond its 'duty to provide education to those who require it' to actively promote learning opportunities. Others emphasize either the competitive or the sustainability dimensions of the cities providing such learning opportunities (Biao, Esaete and Oonyu, 2013). In March 2004, UNESCO launched the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (ICCAR) as a platform for cities to discuss policies to fight racism, discrimination, xenophobia and exclusion (UNESCO, 2016). In 2016, one of the seven regional and national coalitions, the European Coalition of Cities against Racism (ECCAR) partnered with UNESCO and the Marianna V. Vardinoyannis (MVV) Foundation, an NGO promoting the protection of human rights, on the initiative 'Welcoming cities for refugees: Promoting inclusion and protecting rights' (UNESCO, ECCAR and MVV Foundation, 2016). The perspective adopted by the UNESCO initiative for learning cities is similar to that of the educating city: it determines the promotion of lifelong learning for all as a core element of the framework. A learning city is thus a city that:

revitalizes learning in families and communities; facilitates learning for and in the workplace; expands the use of modern learning technologies; improves quality and excellence in learning; fosters a lifelong learning culture; effectively mobilizes its resources in all sectors for the promotion of inclusive learning from basic education to higher education (UIL, 2021).

Built on this vision, the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities promotes individual empowerment and social inclusion, economic development, cultural prosperity and sustainable development (UIL, 2021). It supports the achievement of all SDGs, in particular SDG 4 and SDG 11.

Some cities, such as Rosario in Argentina and Gwangju in the Republic of Korea, have emerged as ‘human rights cities’, i.e. ‘local governments that have affirmatively incorporated elements of international human rights norms into their city policies’ (Davis, 2018, p. 34). Similarly, ‘sanctuary cities’ (especially in Western Europe and North America) are towns that apply more respectful migration policies and protect the rights of undocumented migrants. In Belgium, the *communes hospitalières* (hospitable municipalities) is a group of more than 60 French-speaking municipalities committed to raising its residents’ awareness of migration issues and ensuring that a genuinely welcoming migrant reception policy is implemented across its territory’ (Têcheur, 2018). The network Cities of Migration showcases good practice for refugees’ and migrants’ inclusion, covering education in cities of Europe (CMI, 2019), the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The website includes a refugee portal entitled ‘Good ideas. Open doors’, on which good ideas – as the name suggests – are presented and discussed by experts. The database contains practices aimed to build skills to foster inclusive societies in education.

Supporting migrants’ and refugees’ integration at the local level while fostering diversity and intercultural policies was also at the core of the European network of cities for local integration policies for migrants (CLIP), which ran from 2006 to 2015 and was established by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe together with the German city of Stuttgart and Eurofound. CLIP comprised more than 30 European municipalities and covered issues spanning from housing to interculturality and diversity<sup>103</sup>. In May 2015, another network, Eurocities, published a statement on the role European cities play in the reception and integration of asylum seekers, refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection. Starting with six cities in 1986 (Barcelona, Birmingham, Frankfurt, Lyon, Milan and Rotterdam), the network now covers local governments of over 140 of Europe’s largest cities and over 45 partner cities, and benefits more than 130 million citizens across 39 countries. One of its latest reports was devoted

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103 See <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/about-clip> [Accessed 14 October 2021]

to the inclusion in education of migrants and showcased best practices collected across several European cities (Eurocities, 2017).

Local governments contribute in several ways to inclusion of displaced people and of immigrants in education and, more generally, in the host society. Cities can take a lead role in educational inclusion, contributing to the realization of SDG 4 especially for the underserved and marginalized of all ages, including migrants and refugees. In this respect, integration policies and actions can take different forms: some target institutions, while others focus mainly on groups such as migrants, refugees and local populations. Interventions within the local population include facilitating easier integration, such as by offering civic orientation courses or information on the community and language training; other interventions include the coordination of services targeted to migrants and support for staff working with migrants and refugees (e.g. training and multilingual services).

Interventions focused on groups could, for example, equip migrants and refugees with the skills needed to live in the host society (e.g. language, education and vocational training), and raise awareness or provide information to local communities to limit tensions between established residents and newcomers. This implies that integration policies are not limited to one area but can cut across domains – they could encompass employment, health and education, looking at the entire life-course starting with early childhood and care and continuing through education and adult learning. They can provide public service, create inclusive learning environments, bridge education gaps for immigrants/refugee communities, support their language skills or provide vocational training. In the city of Johannesburg, South Africa, for example, initiatives span different education levels (Box 10).

The action of cities in support of migrants and refugees goes beyond curricular activities. In June 2018, for example, on World Refugee Day, the International Association of Educating Cities (IAEC), via the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) network, expressed its support to the UNHCR campaign Cities#With Refu-

gees, a statement for which was signed by 150 cities worldwide. By signing the statement, mayors and local authorities around the world acknowledged the essential role of cities in creating inclusive environments, and their enormous responsibility in providing access to basic services, including education, to refugees (UNHCR, 2019b).

**Box 10: Integration policy for migrants and refugees in Johannesburg**

Many immigrants, internal and international, have settled in Johannesburg, South Africa, over time, making it the largest city in the country. Internal immigration flows originate from the whole country as people search for better employment or educational opportunities. There are also many international immigrants who have come to the city to work and study or find refuge. Irregular and undocumented migration is another source of arrivals in the city. Zimbabweans and Mozambicans are the largest groups of immigrants in the cities, followed by Nigerians, Chinese and Malawians. Some immigrants come to stay long-term while others come to the city to carry out specific tasks or to study, then return home. South Africa did not recognize refugees until 1993; it then became a signatory to the United Nations and the African Union and implemented a new Refugees Act in 1998 (effective from 2000).

People with a refugee permit and those with refugee status are given nearly the same rights as South African citizens (except the right to vote). The city also has a comprehensive integration policy targeting both migrants and refugees and, in 2004, the city council adopted a comprehensive strategy to address issues of poverty, inequality and social exclusion. In 2007, a strategy was developed to manage the integration of immigrants in the city; it has since become the Johannesburg Migrant Advisory Panel (JMAP), and its role is to advise on the major challenges faced by migrants, including education and financial matters. The city also developed a 'counter xenophobia' strategy aimed at producing media campaigns, training workshops, intercultural dialogues, and sporting and cultural activities designed to showcase and celebrate diversity.

In 2008, a Mayoral Sub-Committee on Migration was formed to create a medium- and long-term strategy for migrant integration and, in 2009, the city established the Johannesburg Migration Advisory Committee (JMAC), chaired by the Executive Mayor. JMAC brings together different stakeholders, including government actors operating at different levels and representatives from various national and international organizations and civil society. In 2010 and 2011, the city analysed the different types of migration flows to explore which strategies could have helped integration. It emerged that the city could have played a key role in data collection, coordination, and structuring reception and integration to minimize tensions between new arrivals and established communities by initiating tailored counter-xenophobia programmes and interventions.

The Department of Home Affairs at the national level of government manages immigration control and regulation along with the determination of asylum seekers' and refugees' status; however, it is the city that plays a key role in their integration. Refugees have the same entitlements to healthcare, employment and education as South African citizens – in fact, all residents are entitled to the rights listed in Chapter 2 of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights,<sup>104</sup> with the exception of those rights that do not apply to non-citizens (such as political rights and rights to freedom of trade, occupation and profession). It is therefore the city's duty to plan effectively for migrants and refugees to enable them to benefit from municipal services. In this respect, the integration policy of the city of Johannesburg has multiple aims, including the provision of basic tools for participation in society (such as training opportunities in the local language, basic knowledge of the city, civic training), programmes to counter discrimination and xenophobia, and effective management of irregular migrants in the context of frontline services such as primary healthcare and education.

In education, the main areas of action include language support (the city provides support to at least one institution per region through direct funding or access to teaching space in commu-

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<sup>104</sup> See <https://www.gov.za/documents/constitution/chapter-2-bill-rights> [Accessed 2 October 2021].

nity development facilities); an orientation programme for new arrivals to assist them in understanding the culture, rights, duties and legislation of the host country; and an education programme for established communities in the city delivered through schools, churches and community-based organizations on issues of migration. In addition, NGO partnerships have been developed to enable migrants to take part in decision-making, and ward and street committees facilitate the welcoming of newcomers into communities. Moreover, as the policy cuts across all departments, the implementation plans are based on a coordinated, collaborative and integrative approach: all municipal-owned entities and departments are required to compile specific indicators that are aligned with the strategic policy programmes and priorities, as set out in the implementation plan.

### *The action of cities can foster changes at the national level*

Municipal decisions can drive change in national legislation. This was the case for preschool enrolment of children of migrants with irregular status in Italy, where, following a 2009 national legislation, a residence permit was required to access a range of services, including non-compulsory education services. Despite this, the city of Turin decided that such a rule should not be applied in the kindergartens managed by the municipalities; Florence and Genoa followed suit soon afterwards. A heated debate ensued, forcing the national government to finally issue a circular in 2010 clarifying that the residence permit was not required to register children in public nursery schools (UNESCO, 2018).

Similarly, in Zurich, Switzerland, an interdepartmental working group set up to assess the situation of irregular migrants and their needs used research commissioned by the University of Zurich to question the access to law and justice (City of Zurich, 2021). The working group found that irregular migrants seldom use the opportunities available to them due to fear of ID checks, lack of awareness or precarious employment. Based on the findings, the city council formulated a position paper on the subject, presented officially in September 2018. Among its principles, it includes an



acknowledgement that the city understands the right to comprehensive education starting in preschool and beyond primary school, also for undocumented pupils.

In Jordan, the scope for autonomous policy-making at the governorate or municipal levels is small; however, implementation of national policies varies at the sub-national levels, leveraging several factors such as those related to cultural, tribal and religious identities. Many municipalities in Mafrqa, northern Jordan, have seen the presence of refugees and of the Za'atari refugee camp as an opportunity to obtain financial support from the central government. In the village of Umm al-Jimal, for example, the mayor managed to get funds to finance infrastructure, rebuild historical sites and renovate the highway between the town and Za'atari.

In the Sahab municipality, the mayor and staff have taken 'a proactive approach to economic and community development' (Betts et al., 2019). The Jordan Compact<sup>105</sup> also has attracted investment; one of its outcomes, the creation of the Sahab Special Economic Zone, has led to many manufacturing firms that were once in the Syrian Arab Republic to relocate there and employ both Syrian and Jordanian nationals. The approach adopted by the municipality has resulted in the growth of inclusive communities that benefit all inhabitants and a reduction in conflicts between established residents and newcomers.

To respond to the needs of refugees and migrants who are mainly in transit in the city of Agadez, Niger, there is a planning process with a particular focus on economic activities such as agricultural and artisanal markets. This process was used as the basis to inform and collaborate with the central government and other actors (International Rescue Committee, 2018). In the Turkish city of Gaziantep, meanwhile, which hosts the largest number of refugees in the country, a holistic integration strategy for refugees,

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105 In 2016, the Government of Jordan, in partnership with the international community, launched the Jordan Compact, which commits the international community to support Jordan in hosting refugees but also support Jordanians and the economy. See <https://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/new-economic-opportunities-jordanians-and-syrian-refugees> [Accessed 2 October 2021].

covering health, education and employment, has been developed. The local economy is growing for the benefit of the whole country as a result.

In southern Uganda, the residents of villages close to the Nakivale Settlement in the Isingiro district have seen the benefits refugees bring to the local communities by, for example, increasing demand for goods and services. However, they also see refugees get access to services that the poorest inhabitants lack, such as health services or access to water. To accommodate the needs of all, Uganda is upgrading municipal infrastructures and improving access to a large range of services, including education in the districts hosting refugees. The 83 projects financed with the support of the World Bank cover several domains, among them construction of classroom blocks and teachers' houses (World Bank, 2016). They also target integration issues concerning refugees and host communities in the national and sub-national development planning frameworks to ensure resiliency and sustainability and to improve living conditions for all (World Bank, 2019b).

Similarly, the Bidibidi refugee settlement in Uganda has adopted policies that allow local residents and refugees to work together, with a focus on small businesses and infrastructure. Plots of land are provided to refugees to enable them to grow food for both their families and to sell. The strategy aims to develop Bidibidi into a sustainable, inclusive city. In addition, to ensure that residents do not see refugees as reaping the majority of the benefits from resources, 30 per cent of all international funding has been earmarked for local communities. For example, if a school is built, it should accommodate 30 per cent local students and 70 per cent refugees (Wernick, 2019).

Meanwhile, in the People's Republic of China, because of demographic trends, many cities are lifting restrictions on migrants, aiming to enlarge the talent pool. In this respect, an urbanization plan published in April 2019 by the country's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) urges cities with populations of less than 3 million to lift all restrictions for domestic

migrants, and those with populations between 3 and 5 million to ‘comprehensively relax permanent residency requirements’(Xin, 2019). In Hangzhou, the capital of China’s Zhejiang Province, for example, regulation previously granted residency permits only to those with a college degree aged 35 and under; similarly, Shijiazhuang, in the north of the country, granted permanent residency only to those with stable employment. These two cities have now relaxed those thresholds. At the same time, the large city of Xi’an, capital of Shaanxi Province, will grant permanent residency to all Chinese citizens with a university degree. These changes will ease the integration for the floating population, i.e. people whose place of residence does not match their ‘hukou’, or place of birth, which is currently one in six people, with about 65 per cent aged 40 and under. Relaxing barriers to settlement can also help to curb the rural to urban divide, reducing inequalities at the country level.

### *Fighting racism and protecting human rights in cities*

To prevent discrimination and fight racism and xenophobia, cities have put a number of initiatives in place, including appointing local ombudsmen, initiating education programmes, and establishing human rights offices and campaigns against hate speech. Education against xenophobia and migrant advisory committees are common city-led efforts (WEF, 2017). São Paulo, Brazil, recently launched the awareness campaign ‘There is a Place for Everyone in São Paulo’ and established the Municipal Council for Migrants in autumn 2017 (ibid.), whereas Mexico City (Mexico), Montevideo (Uruguay), Quito (Ecuador) and Medellín (Colombia) have formed a global coalition of cities against discrimination and racism, adopting transversal policy plans.

In Vienna (Austria), Pichincha (Ecuador)<sup>106</sup> and Pikine (Senegal), human rights offices welcome and provide services for undocumented migrants (UCLG, 2019a). Refugees based in Vienna are also advised on education and labour market services and adult education institutions through the country’s Bildungsdrehscheibe (education hub). In Barcelona, Spain, free support funded by the

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106 Pichincha Gobierno Provincial (2019).

city council is provided to migrants searching to acquire regular status; moreover, the city launched the City of Rights Programme in 2016, led by the Department of Citizens' Rights and Immigration, using Barcelona City Council's Fourth Deputy Mayor's Office as a political reference (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2016). The programme prioritizes three main areas: (1) the rhetoric of hate and discrimination, (2) civil rights and public freedoms in the use of public areas, and (3) full citizenship.

The City of Hamburg, Germany, has started a pilot project called 'Ich bin Hamburger!', which provides people with migrant backgrounds (and especially Turkish residents) with information, guidance and education on how to go through the naturalization process. So far, the project team has advised and helped around 2,700 people, and the German cities of Hannover and Kassel have followed suit with similar projects. In Hamm, a borough in Hamburg, Germany, the Office for Migration and Integration offers all services related to migration and integration through one central service point (Wegweiser-Kommune.de, 2019a).

Also in Europe, the village of Riace in the Italian region of Calabria has become a model of hospitality. It receives a large number of undocumented migrants, who integrate successfully. In Palermo, on the Italian island of Sicily, the mayor considers international mobility as 'an inalienable human right' and campaigns for the 'abolition of residence permits' (Têcheur, 2018). The Council of Europe has also prepared a handbook, presenting 65 good practices implemented in over 25 countries across the continent, demonstrating how local and regional authorities can implement initiatives that make human rights a tangible reality at the grass-roots level. Among these is the Athens Open Schools programme, which brought together refugee and Greek children by transforming 25 public schools into centres for scientific, creative and sports activities. The programme also offers language courses for Athenians and refugees (Athens Partnership, 2019). Moreover, the City Initiative on Migrants with Irregular Status in Europe (C-MISE) published guidance for municipalities on how to respond to the presence of migrants with irregular status in April 2019 with the

support of Oxford University (Spencer and Delvino, 2019). It covers several services, including legal advice, healthcare, education and housing, and how they are provided across Europe. The cities participating in this initiative are Athens, Barcelona, Frankfurt, Ghent, Gothenburg, Lisbon, Oslo, Stockholm and Utrecht, with the cities of Helsinki and Zurich joining as associate members

The city of Foz do Iguaçu, Paraná, Brazil, which sits on the border of Paraguay, opened the 'Migrants' House' in 2008 to assist Paraguayans and other migrants moving through the region. In partnership with the Municipal Government of Foz do Iguaçu and the Secretariat for Women's Policies, the 'House' offers assistance in multiple areas, including information on labour (in Brazil and Paraguay), documentation (migratory regularization, work permits, bank accounts and consular registration), access to public health services (especially for pregnant women) and education. A similar initiative, the Brazilian Workers' House in Japan, opened in 2010 in the city of Hamamatsu, and host one of the largest Brazilian communities in the country (ILO, 2017b).

Barcelona, Spain, and Seoul, Republic of Korea, are also taking responsibility for human rights and citizenship education to create a more inclusive environment. In 2017, Barcelona launched a municipal plan to combat Islamophobia after a consultative process involving representatives from Barcelona's Muslim community, human rights defenders and experts. The plan foresees the creation of educational material to raise awareness of Islamophobia as a form of discrimination, provides training sessions on hate crime discrimination in education centres, promotes workshops in schools on diversity and the stereotyped view of Islam, and monitors the directive on food diversity in school canteens and the standards of religious clothing in schools managed by the Barcelona Education Consortium (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017).

In Lampedusa, the southernmost point in Italy, Giusi Nicolini, the city's former mayor, was awarded the UNESCO Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize for 'her boundless humanity and unwavering commitment to refugee crisis management and integration in

response to the arrival of thousands of refugees on the shores of Lampedusa and elsewhere in Italy<sup>107</sup>. Nicolini made significant progress in human rights advocacy at both the EU and national level, including obtaining extra-budgetary funds for infrastructure developments for migrant receptions and shelters, and the establishment of what UNHCR refers to as the 'Lampedusa Model' (Ruffini and D'Addio, unpublished).

### *The importance of early childhood and youth education for inclusion*

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) matters crucially for later outcomes in life in a vast range of domains, including health and education. This is especially true for children from vulnerable backgrounds, including immigrants and refugees. Yet studies show that both groups have less access to ECCE. With respect to immigrant students, data from the 2015 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) suggest that, on average, they are 12 per cent less likely to attend pre-primary education compared to their native peers (OECD, 2018a).

In the United States of America, cities have started to address the professional development needs of early childhood educators. The support takes place in different forms, including workshops on specific topics, scholarships to earn training certificates/degrees, specialists and coaches who visit classrooms, teacher/peer learning groups and city-wide trainings (NYIC, 2019). The aim of the initiatives is to improve the quality of ECCE for all to build an early learning nation.

In New York City, for example, there are an estimated 142,000 children under the age of five from immigrant backgrounds. To address the fact these children are less likely to be enrolled in quality pre-primary education, the New York Immigration Coalition launched the Linking Immigrant Families to Early Childhood Education (LIFE) project in collaboration with the city's Department of Education. In its first year, the LIFE provided information

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<sup>107</sup> See <https://en.unesco.org/news/giuseppina-nicolini-mayor-lampedusa-and-sos-mediterranee-be-awarded-felix-houphouet-boigny> [Accessed 14 October 2021]

to more than 20,000 city residents from immigrant backgrounds and ECCE application support to 100 'hard-to-reach' immigrant families. 'More than two out of three families who completed an application reported that they would not have been able to apply without the LIFE Project partner's support' (ibid., p. 2).

The city of Recife, Brazil, has given more attention to early childhood and established it as a priority. To make it a reality, the city launched the Legal Framework for Early Childhood, which aims to establish 'principles, guidelines, instruments and competencies for formulating and implementing public policies that guarantee the physical, emotional and social development of children from birth to the age of six in Recife, and that safeguard the rights of pregnant women' (Júlio, 2019, p. 26). The legal framework emerged from the work of 10 of the municipal secretariats with administrative responsibilities for young children and families. It covers 14 areas, with more than 200 policies, programmes and projects (ibid.).

A major step for effective implementation [of the framework] was the establishment of an intersectoral steering committee within the Legal Framework for Early Childhood, coordinated by the Planning and Management Secretariat. ... Their objective is not only to ensure access to education or healthcare, but also to work towards children's integral personal development, especially considering the importance of quality interactions with caregivers (ibid., p. 27).

In Vienna, Austria, a component of the StartWien integration initiative is the Jugendcollege (Youth College) (Cardwell et al., 2018), which was developed in 2015 with the involvement of the Department for Integration and Diversity of the city along with numerous educational institutions and funding agencies. The programme provides free education, training and mentoring to young asylum seekers and refugees aged between 15 and 21 years, mainly from Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Somalia, for a maximum duration of nine months. Maths, English, ICT and the German language are some of the core modules to allow young people to leave the college with a school-leaving certificate. A

compulsory module on ‘critical participation’ teaches topics to foster peaceful social and political coexistence in Austria. Enrolment is based on attendance of one to two days of assessment, during which participants’ knowledge and motivations are assessed. Since its launch, over 1,000 young migrants have participated in the initiative and 160 have completed it and entered further training or employment (ibid.).

A programme in Athens, Greece, ‘English Through Comic Books’, addresses the needs of young refugees from vastly different backgrounds to help bridge their learning gaps as they learn to live in a new city. It is the result of a cooperation between the Accommodation and Social Services Scheme for Asylum Seekers, realized through the city’s Development and Destination Management Agency, and Comicdom Press. The aim is to not only boost reading and comprehension skills, but also to improve emotional intelligence, offering a safe, welcoming environment outside of the home in local Greek society. It is also a part of the Athens Open Schools programme, which helps to remove barriers and offers opportunities for teenagers to interact with one another, share in new experiences and discover connections.

### *Language is key for inclusion*

Provision of language courses for new arrivals and people with migrant backgrounds is an important part of the cities’ efforts to integrate migrants (see **Box 11**). In Germany, municipalities and local authorities have set up a ‘dialogue with refugees’ that disseminates good practices and experiences and practical tools to help refugees’ integration. Since 2016, 54 dialogues on topics ranging from language and education to housing have been organized involving at least 50 municipalities.

#### **Box 11. Language fosters inclusion but can also exclude**

For most refugees, instruction in the language of the host country requires a transition from one language to another.

For example, educational histories of resettled refugee children in the USA indicate that one major barrier faced in first-asy-



lum countries is curriculum language and language learning (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). Refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo living in Uganda transitioned from French to English. Children were placed in lower grades due to their lack of English proficiency and had higher repetition rates even if they had already mastered the content (ibid., 2006). Burundian refugees in Rwanda faced the same challenge. In Athens and Thessaloniki, Greece, refugee children stopped attending formal education mainly because of language difficulties (REACH and UNICEF, 2017). Adolescent Congolese and Somali refugees in Uganda found that linguistic differences made friendships more difficult and led to discrimination that diminished their well-being and self-worth. As a result, they were more likely to withdraw from school, turn towards harmful connections, and join gangs (Stark et al., 2015).

Many teachers working with refugees also do not have the necessary training to support second-language acquisition and learning. In Lebanon, schools teach English and French parts of the curriculum in Arabic for Syrian refugee children (UNESCO, 2018); yet teachers reported challenges in doing so, as they are not used to teaching these subjects in Arabic (Culbertson and Constant, 2015). In Turkey, teachers appointed by the Ministry of Education lack training to teach Turkish to foreigners. While they can teach reading and writing, children are reported to remain weak in language comprehension (Coşkun and Emin, 2016). In Uganda, children in the same classroom often do not share a common language, and the translation of instructional content multiple times is an obstacle to progress (Dryden-Peterson, 2015).

Where the language in host countries differs from the language that the refugees speak or are familiar with, instructional programmes that use rigorous second-language teaching methods are essential. In Turkey, informal Turkish language courses are held for refugees in public training centres (Bircan and Sunata, 2015). In Chad, several Sudanese teachers are taking part in a certified two-year programme at the national bilingual teacher training college to equip themselves to teach the Chadian curriculum (Save the Children, UNHCR and Pearson, 2017). Curricula

and programmes taught in the refugees' native languages tend instead to worsen their chances of success, as they are deprived of one of the main vehicles for a full integration in society.

In many high-income countries, too, language of instruction is a barrier to the successful mainstreaming of refugee children in the national systems. In The Hague, Netherlands, local authorities organize welcome classes for asylum seekers (not yet granted the status of refugee), which usually take place in or near asylum centres. Children who do not speak Dutch are first given language classes and then gradually introduced to other subjects. After a maximum of two years, children are mainstreamed into the regular education system. Similarly, in Oslo, Norway, children are offered initial welcoming classes before being mainstreamed into national education. The duration of classes varies from just some months to up to two years (Eurocities, 2017).

Ancona, Italy, is part of the ICAM (Italiano Cantiere Aperto Marche) project, which offers literacy, language and civic education courses with a specific focus on immigrant communities. The involvement of the Bengali community, representing the second-largest foreign community in the town, was one of the objectives of the project. Women in particular were targeted: a babysitting service was provided to make their participation in the course possible (European Committee of the Regions, 2019).

In Oslo, Norway, an obligation is set for refugees over 16 years of age to complete at least 600 hours of language training (they can receive up to 3,000 hours). Eligibility for asylum seekers is limited to 175 hours (Eurocities, 2017). In Calgary, Canada, the Calgary Board of Education established schools for newcomers, migrants who cannot speak English, and those who are not ready for the general education system. In those schools, migrants and refugees are prepared to enter the latter.

### *Building bridges through learning in the family*

In Frankfurt, Germany, the project 'Mama lernt Deutsch – Papa auch!' ('Mama learns German – Dad too!') teaches language skills while also fostering the connections between schools and immigrant families. Immigrant mothers and fathers attend the classes of their children in kindergarten and primary school twice a week to learn German and share some of their educational experience (Lochmann and Loreth, 2019). In Wuppertal, west of the country, the Department of Immigration and Integration implemented a project called Educational Competences, funded by the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, to strengthen parenting skills. A further project was approved with state funding that continues to build on the local initiative 'Intercultural education concepts: When parents, migrant organizations and educational professionals work together.' Important partners in these projects are the migrant organizations that support and accompany the project.

Meanwhile, in the country's capital, Berlin, unemployed migrants with children are trained as 'district mothers', who can advise other mothers of children up to 12 years of age with the same ethnic background on health, education and language issues. In the Neukölln district in the north of the city, around 80 per cent of children and adolescents under the age of 18 live in immigrant families. Many mothers have few external contacts and therefore have problems learning the German language. This results in a lack of exposure to educational and recreational opportunities; in parallel, parents are often unaware of the types of support they can claim. Language barriers and cultural differences are further hurdles. These factors combined have a detrimental effect on the educational opportunities of their children: many leave school without graduating. To counter these challenges, the local government developed the Neighbourhood Mothers in Neukölln project, the aim of which is promoting integration through language learning and improving the educational opportunities of children. Since the start of the project, over 400 neighbourhood mothers have been trained as district mothers, of which around 70 are active. In total, more than 10,600 families have been reached. The project is run in cooperation with local, federal and private actors (EC, 2018).

In 1996, the city of Zurich, Switzerland, initiated the Quality in Multi-ethnic Schools (QUIMS) project to fight against social segregation and promote inclusion and diversity in education. The programme is currently part of the legislative framework of the canton and is compulsory for all schools, as over 40 per cent of students have either an immigrant background or do not speak the official language. Both human and financial support is provided to the schools running QUIMS. Beyond a focus on oral and written language communication, the programme fosters connections between parents and teachers to establish a common understanding and respect. The overarching guiding principles of the programme are promotion of language, school success and integration. It uses intercultural mediators to achieve the latter. Currently, 119 schools in Zurich are involved in the QUIMS programme (Kanton Zurich, 2021).

Further north, in Belgium, several cities, including Ghent, Vilvoorde, Ostend and Turnhout, carry out the *Wij Slaan de Brug* ('We bring the bridge') project (Artevelde University College and Education Center, 2017), which is also supported by the Flemish Red Cross. The programme aims to close the gap between school (primary and kindergartens) and home contexts, bringing them closer together. 'Bridge' people, who are often from immigrant backgrounds themselves, visit the homes of newly enrolled students to help with questions or concerns of families. 'Bridging the gap' might mean helping a parent apply for educational financing support, making time to listen to parents, organizing an information session or providing language support. Besides speaking Dutch and French, 'bridge' people they can also speak Turkish, Arabic or one of the Berber languages, and thus are able to communicate with immigrant families. The programme is promoted by the education and equal opportunities departments of the cities (*ibid.*).

A similar programme developed by a group of parents in the Belgian cities of Antwerp and Oud-Borgerhout in 2006 is *School in Zicht* ('School in sight'), which aims to challenge educational segregation and concentration or segregated schools (schools in which nearly all pupils are underprivileged), advocating for more

diversity. To do this, the programme focuses on both schools and parents: it makes schools aware of the changes in the neighbourhood and the benefits of diversity, and informs parents about schools' facilities and organizes open days (Albertijn and Smeyers, 2009).

Elsewhere in the EU, in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, a 'buddy' programme is in place, wherein higher education students aged between 18 and 20 guide youth aged 13 to 15 whose parents may not have had much schooling themselves (WEF, 2017). In Genoa, Italy, the Regional Education Office of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) was involved in the development of the Foreign Students Resource Centre (CRAS). The centre aims to foster integration of foreign students and their families. This is a specific desk that, within the Centre for Schools and New Cultures (Centro Scuole Nuove Culture), supports schools in welcoming migrant pupils with projects that guarantee attendance and the right to study. Moreover, it represents a connection point for teachers and families, thereby performing the task of a cultural and linguistic mediator (Centro Scuole Nuove Culture, 2019a).

### *Transitioning between education and employment*

Vocational training is a crucial component of the integration of migrants and refugees in their final places of settlement; however, the competences of the cities vary greatly across and within countries in this respect. Some cities have full responsibility for vocational training, while others merely coordinate various activities and connect education and employment actors, involving the private sectors. In some cities, vocational training is combined with language support; in others, its main purpose is to bridge the gap between education and employment.

The Calgary Local Immigration Partnership (CLIP) in Canada is developing a mapping system to help immigrants find jobs that best match their skills and knowledge. In addition, the project promotes access to public life for immigrants using a combination of different interventions, such as the establishment of a welcoming culture, job search assistance and the involvement of migrants

in networks. During the campaign's run to raise awareness of the project, several meetings between the local community and immigrants were organized to create stronger bonds between the groups (Wegweiser-Kommune.de, 2019b).

In 2009, the city of Bremen, Germany, launched a campaign to recruit more young people into the civil service. With 25 per cent of Bremen's population from migrant backgrounds, the campaign targeted youth who needed to feel they were 'equal among equals'. To reach its target audience, the campaign used different instruments, including a print media advertising campaign, career fairs, a cross-departmental website devoted to promoting career options and job openings, and outreach to migrant organizations and school cafeterias (Maytree Foundation and Cities of Migration, 2012).

Meanwhile, in Paris, France, the activities of private and community stakeholders are subsidized to foster entrepreneurship and employment opportunities for migrants. In Toronto, Canada, city employees volunteer to provide mentoring to skilled immigrants on topics related to the workplace and professional culture. In New York, USA, a television programme *We Are New York*, created by the Mayor's Office of Adult Education in partnership with the City University of New York, provides an opportunity to practise English while learning about essential public services, such as schools, banks and hospitals (Maytree Foundation and Cities of Migration, 2012).

Similar initiatives have been launched in the African region. In Mogadishu, Somalia, for example, a strategy to integrate internally displaced persons (IDPs) at the city level and in society through employment and entrepreneurship programmes has been developed with assistance from UN agencies (IRC, 2018). In Maiduguri, Nigeria, a Comprehensive Entrepreneurship Development Center (CED) was set up by the regional government of Borno State with support from the Central Bank of Nigeria. The centre aims to help vulnerable youth (including IDPs) to earn an income (ibid.).

### *Fostering connections through education*

Besides language courses, cities are increasingly investing in education on multiculturalism to change attitudes and foster openness and diversity. In Genoa, Italy, a migration laboratory has been set up within the municipal Directorate of School, Sport and Youth Policies. It promotes and disseminates intercultural education projects in schools, from pre-primary to lower secondary levels. Some of the main objectives are to simplify the inclusion of new arrivals, especially in schools with high percentages of pupils and students with a migration background; to counter segregation effects; to stimulate and encourage openness, cohabitation and respectful integration; and to promote an understanding of the richness of encountering multiplicity and diversity. Technical staff work with school managers, teachers and educators. Some projects focus on language development and employ intercultural mediators (Centro Scuole Nuove Culture, 2019b).

In Athens, Greece, many activities designed as part of the Open Schools programme – wherein educational, cultural, sports and entertainment activities take place on school premises after school hours – target marginalized groups, such as refugees, persons with functional needs, adults with disabilities, and older people, to promote social inclusion. In April 2018, Open Schools was recognized by the Council of Europe for its efforts at integration, while other Athens Partnership initiatives, such as the Athens Coordination Center for Migrant and Refugee Issues, resulted in the city being recognized as the 2018 European Capital of Innovation (Athens Partnership, 2021).

In l'Hospitalet de Llobregat, the second most populated city in Catalonia, Spain, nearly one out of every five inhabitants has a migration background, mainly from North Africa, Latin America and Asia. The unemployment rate is high and the average gross household income is well below the region's average. Educational improvement became a priority in 2007, when the city council set objectives such as minimizing truancy and early school dropout, promoting inclusion of immigrants in schools, and encouraging close integration in the community. The strategy adopted was

based on the Learning-Service (ApS) methodology, which combines curriculum with a project that serves the entire community and involves different departments of the municipality. The range of services provided is very wide and includes assistance in residencies for older people; support with reading, writing, learning or digital literacy for adults; and welcoming and integrating new students into schools. The initiative was coordinated and promoted by a working group that included teachers, social partners, the Learning-Service Development Centre of Catalonia, the regional government and the city council.

Supporting the education of immigrants and refugees to promote their inclusion also means going beyond cognitive skills and developing programmes to counter the effects of trauma. In this respect, programmes that use arts and culture to foster education through creativity are imperative. Involvement in cultural projects and activities fosters a sense of belonging, strengthens bonds in communities, raises self-esteem, develops skills and raises awareness of different cultures and identities, all of which help with integration in society. Arts, culture, sport and general access to recreational activities are ways to overcome cultural or linguistic barriers.

In Cardiff, South Wales, a course designed by the police force and the teaching organization English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provides new arrivals with an understanding of the laws in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland while teaching them English and building a 'relationship of trust' (Cities of Migration, 2008). The success of the initiative has pushed other communities to replicate it, such as in South Yorkshire, England (ibid.). A similar initiative comes from Cologne, Germany, where workshops in *Offene Deutschhilfe* ('Open German help') are held weekly in the public library, helping refugees in many areas, including language learning, job-seeking and accommodation. The German Red Cross in cooperation with private partners and the city delivers these workshops, one-to-one language classes and mentoring sessions for refugee families and the local community (Cities of Migration, 2017).



Meanwhile, in the Amman municipality of Jordan, which gave refuge to more than 400,000 Syrians in 2016 and nearly 30 per cent of its inhabitants claim to be foreign-born, the district of Badr Nazzal uses a series of micro-initiatives supported by international donors and local partners to fight against spatial segregation and connect host and refugee communities. The first micro-initiative redeveloped local parks to transform them into a 'space of encounter' between the Syrian refugees and the Jordanian citizens. The second provided football training courses to children aged eight to 12 from both host and refugees' communities. Despite their usefulness, however, financial and temporal limitations prevented scalability (Hofer, Lipietz and Wickson, 2017).

The El Obrador Cultural Center in Rosario, Argentina, also aims to make culture more accessible to the least advantaged territories of the city, such as the western district of Rosario, which is home to increasing numbers of irregular migrants (IAEC, 2021a). The programme attempts to offer a better quality of life to the population by promoting their rights, helping them integrate in the labour market, and fostering cultural diversity and identities (ibid.). Also on the South American continent, in Medellín, Colombia, the Mayor's Office started the ¡Sos Paisa! network in 2004, an initiative to maintain a sense of belonging of the *Paisas* (people born in the Department of Antioquia, Colombia) who now live abroad to the city, making them 'good ambassadors' and fundamental partners for the city's development (IAEC, 2021b).

### *The importance of better planning*

Well-managed migration is necessary to realize inclusion at the local level, which goes beyond schools' and other educational institutions' walls and has several dimensions. According to the International Rescue Committee (2018, p. 15),

Building inclusive communities for refugees and IDPs requires inclusive city planning which is the assurance that city governments' plans, policies, and programs explicitly include the needs and perspectives of displaced and marginalized residents. Inclusive city planning requires (a) strategic city planning for inclusive public service delivery, develop-

ing local capacity to institutionalize response efforts with a long-term perspective, (b) extending services to displaced and marginalized residents, and (c) meeting the unique needs of displaced residents with humanitarian support, acknowledging the diversity of experiences for displaced residents living within the same city.

Given the geographical concentration of immigrant students in many countries, education planners should work with urban planners to find ways to prevent residential segregation, which results in education segregation (Brunello and De Paola, 2017). Methods such as transport subsidies and targeted school assignments might well work, but can have varying outcomes. Therefore, to realize inclusion, some cities have taken a holistic approach, reforming services to connect people and fight stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination. The city of Medellín, Colombia, for example, built *Unidad de Vida Articulada (UVA)*, or ‘organized living units’, which are inclusive spaces located in areas lacking basic facilities. The project was led by the city council and involved the residents, who were asked to define and monitor the project. Several activities are available in UVAs, including training in schools, study support and IT support. In UVA public spaces, there are cinemas, libraries, and areas for sport and recreation. Since 2012, the 20 UVAs established in Medellín have been used by more than 1.5 million people (IAEC, 2021a).

The need for better planning and well-managed migration policies for ‘ensuring safe, orderly and regular migration’ was very apparent in the 2016 New York Declaration for Migrants and Refugees (UNGA, 2016, p. 2), which highlights the ‘particular needs of local authorities, who are the first receivers of migrants’ and recognizes that ‘a comprehensive refugee response should involve a multi-stakeholder approach, including national and local authorities’ (ibid., pp. 11–13).

This call for a coordinated response is even more urgent in the Global Compact of Migration, adopted in December 2018 in Morocco, which uses the expression ‘in cooperation with local authorities’ repeatedly for realizing the commitments affirmed

therein (United Nations, 2018a, 2018b). However, the involvement of local authorities in the planning and formulation of policies to include migrants and refugees still lags behind. While some countries have taken important steps to include refugees in national education systems, the role in such matters at the sub-national level is rarely defined. But there are examples that show the progress is underway. In December 2017, in the Djibouti Declaration on Regional Refugee Education, the education ministers of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda committed to ‘integrate education for refugees and returnees into National Education Sector Plans by 2020’ (IGAD, 2017a, p. 3), and the annex to the declaration includes examples of possible actions, such as establishing a regional committee for monitoring implementation of plans (IGAD, 2017b).

In Uganda (**Box 12**), refugee policy is based on three pillars: (1) equality, dialogue and mutual support; (2) sustainable livelihoods; and (3) inclusion of refugees in local government-managed systems such as education. This approach is based on the belief that displacement is an area of shared responsibility across sectors, and of shared opportunities for both refugees and nationals (Clements, Shoffner and Zamore, 2016).

**Box 12: Uganda’s example to include refugees in education is unique, but efforts are needed to ‘localize’ processes and respond adequately to funding needs at the local level.**

Uganda’s Education Response Plan (ERP) for Refugees and Host Communities, which ran from January 2018 to June 2021, is a unique strategy to address the education needs in 34 of the country’s refugee-hosting sub-counties in 12 districts. It aimed to increase access to and quality education for refugee and host community children and reach more than 675,000 refugee and host students per year at a total cost of USD 389 million (Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports, 2020). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) supported the establishment and functioning of the ERP Secretariat within Uganda’s Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES), which promoted the ERP’s implementation at the district level.

As of the end of June 2019, Uganda had hosted almost 1.3 million refugees and asylum seekers, coming mostly from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The refugee population is very heterogeneous and covers 10 nationalities present in various districts, including in the capital, Kampala, with over 84 per cent being women and children. To ensure refugees' voices are heard, a Refugee Engagement Forum (REF) is held each year with the refugee leaders of all settlements and from Kampala, scheduled before the annual Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) Steering Group's meeting. According to the June 2019 REF, the CRRF's priority remains the localization of the refugee response (UNHCR, 2019a).

Empowering local actors to respond to the influxes of refugees in the short- and long-term is essential to managing immediate and longer-term influxes. Kampala, for example, has a population of about 1.5 million, 5 per cent of which are refugees. The low-income and informal settlement areas in the city increase annually. A 2016 study highlighted that 'while national-level obligations regarding displaced populations fall primarily within the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), the Local Government Act (2003) and the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) Act (2010) accord Kampala considerable responsibility for the delivery of services to the population within its jurisdiction', including 'refugees and internally displaced people residing within Kampala's municipal boundaries' (Landau et al., 2016, p. 11). The KCCA was not part of the 'process of planning and managing humanitarian programs'; therefore, the role assigned to KCCA was mainly one of protection 'while city-level officials had limited knowledge of those humanitarian programs that exist within their jurisdictions' (ibid., p. 12).

Taking inspiration from the municipality of Athens, Greece, Kampala has since created the Kampala Coordination Forum for Displacement, Migration and Urban Refugees and has termed itself a 'Kampala for All'. Moreover, recognizing that refugees need assistance and a comprehensive response to their needs, the KCCA developed a Strategic Response to Displacement, Migration and Resettlement in April 2018. Aligned with the UN

Global Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, the strategy facilitates the integration of migrants' and refugees' needs in city planning (Archer, 2018).

Strong governance is necessary to realize inclusion at the local level. Social inclusion and the right to the city are closely related to the issue of governance of migration at the local level and to the extent to which cities respond to needs of the most underserved. Responses include protecting their rights and ensuring they have access to basic services, such as healthcare, education and housing. Challenges and opportunities of integration for both migrants, refugees and cities, including in education, are likely to differ across contexts and areas. To manage this, local governments require not only adequate financing and coordination mechanisms but also sound governance.

Fostering stronger governance at the local level is the aim behind the creation of the new Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) Mayors Mechanism, which builds upon the outcomes of the Global Conference on Cities and Migration held in Mechelen, Belgium, in 2018. The GFMD Mayors Mechanism is co-led by the Mayors Migration Council (MMC), which comprises mayors from cities around the world, including Los Angeles, Athens, Montreal, Milan, Freetown, Kampala, Amman and Bristol. With its partners – in particular United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the C40 Cities Leadership Group (C40) – the MMC commits to urgent action on global challenges such as the integration of migrants and refugees and climate change.<sup>108</sup>

Another important forum is the Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM), established in 2016. The GPM offers an alternative approach to governance to build an inclusive and sustainable world and to localize the SDGs. It is instrumental in facilitating debates between mayors on global and national challenges and offers a digital space for discussion on its virtual platform. In May 2019,

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108 See <https://www.mayorsmigrationcouncil.org/> [Accessed 7 October 2021].

it presented a resolution at the very first UN-Habitat General Assembly on 'Empowering cities to cope with global challenges',<sup>109</sup> which received support from 43 mayors representing 43 cities from 27 countries and five continents (GPM, 2019).

### *Examples of successful funding mechanisms*

Finding financial resources for the integration of migrants and refugees can represent a challenge, especially in low-income settings. Only five out of the 23 cities covered in a report by the International Rescue Committee (IRC, 2018) had a dedicated budget at the local level to support integration efforts. In Kampala, Uganda, and Maiduguri, Nigeria, for example, lack of funding was mentioned as an important challenge to supply assistance and services to migrants and refugees.

In some countries, cities have set up a special fund to support the education of the most vulnerable migrants, such as undocumented or unaccompanied minors (PICUM, 2009). The city of Sint-Niklaas, Belgium, for example, has set up a solidarity fund to which all schools, private and public, contribute to fund education projects for undocumented pupils. The city of Amsterdam, Netherlands, through the financing of the foundation 'Leren zonder Papieren' ('Learning without papers'), has supported the expenses for the education of children of undocumented parents by covering all the materials necessary as well as fees for school trips. In Ghent, Belgium, schools can fill out an application form to qualify for free transportation to schools (bus passes) for undocumented students (Delvino, 2017). Meanwhile, in Altena, Germany, the programme 'KOMM-AN' ('arrive'), which supports municipal integration and specific service provision for migrants, is funded at federal and *Länder* (state) levels. Sharing tasks with neighbouring municipalities helps with the response to more and diverse needs (OECD, 2018b).

Toronto, Canada, has developed a learning opportunity index, which is used to determine the support needed by schools in ur-

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109 <https://globalparliamentofmayors.org/8402-2/>

ban areas in which a high percentage of disadvantaged groups reside, including migrants and refugees. The index ranks schools on the basis of several neighbourhood variables, such as the percentage of families whose income is below the low-income measure before tax (i.e. at or less than half the median income in the city), the percentage of families receiving social assistance, the percentage of adults (aged 25 to 64) without a high school diploma, the percentage of adults with university degrees, and the share of single-parent families (Toronto District School Board, 2017).

Substantial support also comes from international actors. In this respect, the European Parliament voted in March 2019 to re-establish the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), whose budget for 2021–2027 is EUR 9.882 billion (around USD 11.4 million). This has been celebrated by local government representatives, as at least 5 per cent of the budget is reserved for them (EC, 2021). Partnerships between local governments, financial institutions and foundations at the national and international level sustain efforts for the integration of migrants and the forcibly displaced at the local level. For example, Rescuing Futures is a partnership between the IRC and Citi Foundation to provide training to 990 refugees, displaced persons and vulnerable local youth in Athens, Greece; Amman, Jordan and Yola, Nigeria (IRC, 2018). The programme also provides seed funding across the three cities and engages both city governments and local communities.

Finally, with the World Bank allocating extra funds to refugees and host communities through the International Development Association (IDA) regional sub-window (World Bank, 2019a), the Government of Uganda will now support the Municipal Infrastructure Development Program (World Bank, 2019b) and the Integrated Water Management and Development Project to better respond to the water and sanitation needs of rural and urban refugee hosting communities. These funds also support the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP) in the Horn of Africa, covering 11 districts hosting the largest number of refugees (ibid.).

## Conclusion and recommendations

Education and lifelong learning influence cities and are key to taking advantage of cities' physical and social capital. But cities are also the sites of different sorts of inequalities. Vulnerable populations in cities in both low- and high-income countries suffer from poor access to basic services such as education, housing and transport, which fosters disillusion, discontent and sometimes violence. Education can then play a crucial role in tackling inequality and discrimination in urban areas. Cities can do a lot to include all inhabitants, especially the most vulnerable, in education and, eventually, in societies. They can organize language courses to improve their ability to communicate with their peers, establish vocational courses for youth and adults, foster the provision of early childhood education to immigrant and refugee families, bolster employability through career guidance and job placement services, organize programmes with flexible schedules suited to diverse needs, and raise awareness on the opportunities available. However, while education is delivered at the local level, the city governments often have limited power in education matters. It is essential that integrated policy-making occurs at the sub-national level to address the needs of all inhabitants, including migrants and forcibly displaced people.

Addressing migration issues in plans at local, national and global levels is the route to a sustainable solution that benefits all while addressing the large and protracted displacement affecting so many countries. Responding to integration needs at the local level fosters opportunities for economic growth while reducing tensions and conflicts across groups. A focus on the welfare of the most vulnerable may require a shift in the way municipalities work, but has the potential to benefit society as a whole.

Despite the benefits, cities face great challenges with migration policies in urban planning and development initiatives. Lack of human and financial resources and coordination hinder progress. Planning for the integration of people with migrant backgrounds and the forcibly displaced implies adopting holistic approaches

'A focus on the welfare of the most vulnerable may require a shift in the way municipalities work, but has the potential to benefit society as a whole.'



favouring inclusion over marginalization and segregation. This involves thinking ahead about ways to overcome the full range of barriers preventing migrants and the forcibly displaced to take part fully in the urban economy and system.

As municipalities are at the forefront of the reception and inclusion of migrants and refugees, they need to develop their expertise to face such issues, and the central government must support them. However, because of the lack of coordination between central and sub-national levels, cities must often take the lead creating initiatives and partnerships with other stakeholders. This underlies the need for NGOs and humanitarian agencies to coordinate with the local authorities<sup>110</sup> and other national departments (Monteith, 2017) to ensure that the voices of migrants and the forcibly displaced influence the design and delivery of services. It is therefore essential to establish a dialogue with them and to bring information on their needs to the knowledge of local authorities.

It is fundamental to invest in data collection to show where the need to access basic services and education are highest. Investment in the provision of access to quality education that is non-violent and culturally sensitive is also key, as is establishing effective, inclusive learning environments for migrants and refugees at all ages. The latter should include age-appropriate language classes, diversity campaigns in schools and for youth for both migrant and non-migrant populations, and vocational training and opportunities to foster contacts between different groups. The management of diversity and the creation of the conditions necessary to build sustainable and inclusive societies should be a concern of us all.

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110 For a good example of NGOs working with authorities to help refugees and IDPs in Uganda, see <https://www.iied.org/refugee-livelihoods-ugandan-cities-mind-gap-between-policy-practice>. [Accessed 7 October 2021].

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# Chapter 6

## → The longevity dimension in inclusion for ageing populations

### The context and challenge

Population ageing is poised to become one of the most significant social transformations of the twenty-first century with implications for nearly all sectors of society (UN, 2020).

We are confronted by an unprecedented longevity revolution that is transforming the world we have known. Inclusion for older people must be viewed in this context – although the COVID-19 pandemic has magnified existing vulnerabilities and inequalities in our social systems so that the world is already a different place to that at the time of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities conference on inclusion in Medellín, Colombia, in September 2019.<sup>111</sup> The dual impact of these unprecedented changes, along with the emerging technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, means that this is now a time to reimagine our society in fundamental terms as we rethink familiar concepts such as lifelong learning, learning cities and communities ‘recovering’ from the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. The longevity dimension is a significant aspect of this rethinking process.

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AND DENISE  
REGHENZANI-  
KEARNS

‘This is now a time to reimagine our society in fundamental terms as we rethink familiar concepts such as lifelong learning, learning cities and communities ‘recovering’ from the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic.’

<sup>111</sup> For more information about the conference, see <https://www.learningcities2019.org/> [Accessed 9 October 2021].

Demography points to the reality that the next 30 years will require different approaches to meeting the needs of ageing populations, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. This situation is shown in **Table 2**.

**Table 2.** Number and distribution of persons aged 60+, by region, in 2017 and 2050.

	Number of persons aged 60 years or older in 2017 (millions)	Number of persons aged 60 years or over in 2050 (millions)	Percentage of change between 2017 and 2050	Distribution of older persons in 2017 (percentage)	Distribution of older persons in 2050 (percentage)
World	962.3	2080.5	116.2	100.0	100.0
Africa	68.7	225.8	228.5	7.1	10.9
Asia	549.2	1273.2	131.8	57.1	61.2
Europe	183.0	247.2	35.1	19.0	11.9
Latin America/Caribbean	76.0	198.2	160.7	7.9	9.5
North America	78.4	122.8	56.7	8.1	5.9
Oceania	6.9	13.3	92.6	0.7	0.6

Source: *UN (2017, p. 5)*.

Table 2 highlights the following key aspects of the demographic challenge:

- Growth in the number of older persons is a global phenomenon;
- The greatest change up to 2050 will occur in developing countries;
- Globally, the population aged 65 and over is growing faster than all other age groups;
- The most significant increases will occur in Africa, requiring fresh ideas and policies;
- Significant increases will occur in Latin America and Asia.

Up to now, age-friendly World Health Organization (WHO) programmes promoting access for older people to facilities and services have made the most progress in high-income countries.



The demographic challenge up to 2050 will require a focus on developing countries, with particular attention to the demographic shifts in African countries.

#### *The interaction of demography and urbanization*

Addressing the demographic challenge has been made more complex for cities and their governments by the ongoing growth of urbanization. Currently, more than half of the world's population lives in urban areas; by 2050, it is expected to be about 70 per cent. This rate of urbanization will be highest in Africa and Asia – in fact, over the next four decades, the urban population is likely to triple in Africa and increase by 1.7 times in Asia (UN DESA, 2015). Orienting the planning of learning cities to these urbanization and demographic trends is therefore a critical challenge. Addressing what has been termed 'urban apartheid', linked to the growing inequality in cities (Mayor and Binde, 2001), is central to this challenge.

#### *The longevity approach*

The extent of the demographic change will require a shift, from an ageing society narrative with a focus on the end of life, to a longevity approach that addresses the whole life-course in the era

'The extent of the demographic change will require a shift, from an ageing society narrative with a focus on the end of life, to a longevity approach that addresses the whole life-course in the era of "the hundred-year life".'

of ‘the hundred-year life’. This will require rethinking the role and stages of the education journey and giving new life to the concepts of lifelong learning and learning cities. It will also stimulate innovation in exploring options for a sustainable society, such as people-centred ‘small societies’.

The Stanford Center on Longevity White Paper, entitled ‘A Global Agenda for a New Map of Life’, describes the features of a longevity approach in the following terms:

A longevity perspective recognises that development is a recursive process with many interconnected stages that requires a broad range of interventions and measures covering education, work, finances, health, community, environment and relationships. We must not only care for the elderly but prepare children for century long lives (Barry et al., 2019, p. 4).

A longevity approach seen in these broad terms will create a new agenda for learning cities, addressing key structural features of the longevity era, such as intergenerational relations, particularly between young people and seniors. The longevity era will require new language – and norms as dated concepts, such as ageism, will give way to language appropriate to the hundred-year life. It will bring a new life to the principles of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning’s *Medellín Manifesto: Learning Cities for Inclusion* (UIL, 2019) when addressing the challenge of how these principles can be adapted to the context of the longevity life course. These cultural challenges were also identified in the Stanford Center’s White Paper:

Humans are however creatures of culture, exquisitely designed to attend to norms and social cues. Responding to these opportunities (in the new map of life) will require new social norms and new behaviours at every stage of life (ibid.).

In the sections that follow, we discuss some of the steps that could be taken towards a longevity approach to inclusion for ageing populations. This will require new ideas, broadened cross-sectoral partnerships, many networks, and a creative use of new

technologies in confronting the challenge of contributing to a new map of life in the longevity era of the hundred-year life.

## The evolving conceptual framework: From individuals ageing to deep societal change

The conceptual framework that guides policy for inclusion and equity in ageing populations has evolved in the last 20 years, from principles to assist individuals to age well with active ageing, towards a deep understanding of the socio-economic cultural implications of ageing societies. We have summed up this shift in the concept of a longevity approach to ageing societies.

While much of this development has been influenced by the successive phases of the World Health Organization (WHO) approach to ageing, with its cross-sectoral concept of healthy ageing, there has been a fairly general neglect of lifelong learning in action taken by cities, particularly in high-income countries.<sup>112</sup> More recent initiatives flowing from the United Nations 2016 Habitat III conference in Quito, Ecuador, have reinforced the features of these access policies, resulting from successive phases of ‘active ageing’ (UN, 2002; WHO, 2002), ‘age-friendly’ (WHO, 2007a, 2007b) and ‘healthy ageing’ (WHO 2015, 2018, 2019). Habitat III signed off on the *New Urban Agenda* (UN, 2017), with a Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities (Cities For All, 2016), which has already been signed by a large number of cities, and a ‘10-year implementation plan’ to follow. The WHO also launched the ‘The United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030)’ (WHO, 2019).

This has produced a situation of conceptual complexity for policy-makers in cities where lifelong learning objectives do not figure in these plans. Nevertheless, synergies do exist between these programmes, which are directed at inclusion and good ageing: a sensible approach, therefore, is to look for points of connection so that cross-sectoral partnerships can be forged, particularly at the

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<sup>112</sup> See [https://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global\\_age\\_friendly\\_cities\\_Guide\\_English.pdf](https://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf) [Accessed 10 October 2021].

local level, in more integrated approaches to assisting people to age well in the emerging longevity society. Some suggestions are offered in the sections that follow.

Population ageing has seldom been a priority for learning cities up to now, although some good-practice examples exist. The usual approach has been directed at retirement and leisure activities for seniors, with some support for the use of technology. The rich potential of learning cities and lifelong learning to contribute to a society for all ages has yet to be achieved. The WHO conceptual framework for healthy ageing evolved from the concept of ‘active ageing’ in 2002, and its three pillars of participation, health and security (WHO, 2002), to the age-friendly concept which has influenced urban planning in a large number of countries. We discuss the age-friendly approach in following section, along with the WHO healthy-ageing concept derived from its 2015 *World Report on Ageing and Health* (WHO, 2015).

### *Inclusion and equity in ageing populations*

The evolving conceptual framework on healthy ageing has its counterpart in the conceptual development of ideas on inclusion. This can be seen in the paper by Osborne and Hernandez (2021, pp. 2–4) in which traditional links between education and inclusion are noted, with education as the pathway to inclusion for disadvantaged groups. While education has traditionally performed this role, contextual shifts in recent years, including the 2015 UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), have, in the case of older populations, given a greater prominence to the concept of social inclusion. In a rapidly changing society wracked by the current pandemic and with high levels of unemployment and dislocation, social inclusion has become the most relevant concept of inclusion. The World Bank has defined social inclusion as

the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society – improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity (World Bank, 2021)

The establishment of the UN SDGs brought a focus on the links between social inclusion and sustainable development. Sachs (2015) saw the connection, with sustainable development directed at three broad goals for society: economic development, social inclusion and environmental sustainability (ibid., p. 219). The ‘whole society’ perspective required by the UN SDGs connects well with the ‘whole life course’ perspective brought by the longevity concept. The Global Alliance International Longevity Centre (ILC)<sup>113</sup> sees its role in a constructive and affirming societal manner.

**The mission of the ILC Global Alliance is to help society address longevity and population ageing in positive and productive terms, typically using a life course approach highlighting older peoples’ productivity and contribution to family and society as a whole (ILC, 2021)**

Longevity, seen in these broad societal terms, brings with it the challenge of ‘building a global agenda for the new map of life’, as articulated by the Stanford University Center on Longevity in its White Paper (Barry et al., 2019). By rethinking lifelong learning in the multiple flexible stages of the emerging longevity life course, learning cities are well placed to contribute to this challenge. This rethinking process was raised by Schuller and Watson in their 2009 UK report on the future of lifelong learning,<sup>114</sup> and later treated by Schuller again in 2018 in ‘Managing the Transitions’.

The longevity concept will be a stimulus to innovation in achieving education, lifelong learning and community-building goals. This was noted by the Director of the MIT Age Lab, Joseph Coughlin (2017), when he spoke of the dividend and narrative of living a longer life, declaring, ‘Longevity will be one of the greatest drivers of innovation in the next 100 years.’ Learning cities should be in the vanguard in these efforts to rethink ageing in positive, meaningful and productive whole-of-life-course terms. Learning cities,

‘Longevity will be one of the greatest drivers of innovation in the next 100 years.’

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113 See <https://www.ilc-alliance.org/about/> [Accessed 10 October 2021].

114 See <https://learningandwork.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports/learning-through-life-inquiry-into-the-future-of-lifelong-learning/> [Accessed 10 October 2021].

supported by all sectors of education, are in a unique position to develop strategies to address intergenerational relations throughout the longevity life course.

### *Urban planning and development*

Inclusion objectives have been of growing importance in urban planning and development over the past 20 years, mainly from the perspective of access to facilities and services. This has benefitted older people. Such interest has been driven by the World Health Organization's work on active ageing and healthy ageing during this period, while, more recently, *The New Urban Agenda*, endorsed during Habitat III (UN, 2017), has added to these policy thrusts. Habitat III also contributed the *Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities* (Cities For All, 2016), which brought an ethical/policy framework with six principles that are relevant to the work of learning cities in progressing inclusion for older people. These developments have been supported throughout by human rights principles brought by the United Nations and, more recently, by the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Lifelong learning opportunities in cities**

Meeting the needs of ageing populations has not generally been a priority for learning cities up to now (although examples of good practice can be found); however, the magnitude of demographic change – with ageing populations projected for the next 30 years – means that this situation must change. This requires a new generation of learning cities that are 'longevity literate' and connected to broader partnerships in the quest for a sustainable future. Learning cities should become active partners in this quest, leading with a range of associates and drawing on insights from cross-sectoral initiatives.

The starting point is good practice, which already exists in many learning cities. Demographic change to date provides a guide, so that developments in East Asia – in countries such as the Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China and Japan – can be role models for countries at various stages of adapting to the demo-

graphic challenge of ageing populations. Illustrations of good practice in these countries were given in the Kearns and Reghenzani-Kearns (2018) report 'Towards Good Active Ageing for All'. They included the following examples.

### **Suwon, Republic of Korea**

In this city, cross-sectoral examples were given of actions for inclusion for ageing populations. These include the 'Whatever schools' for later-life learning, developed as a people-led initiative with many opportunities responding to the interests of the learners themselves. 'Whatever schools' foster not only classes but also group gatherings, learning circles/cafes, business incubators, field work and human library activities. The city supports this by motivating and helping older people to join up. 'Whoever schools' seem to draw from U3A approaches, enabling tutors to have an encore career. This is open to all ages (Choi, 2018a, pp. 28–29).

### **Seoul, Republic of Korea**

Some of these approaches are realized in a more formal way through the '50+' projects<sup>115</sup> introduced in the Korean capital, Seoul. All campus sites are easily accessible by train, and the range of initiatives encourage older people to lead an active life and maintain their employability. The '50+' initiative can also be easily integrated or extended into Suwon's future development prospects (Choi, 2018b, pp. 37–38).

### **Beijing, People's Republic of China**

Community colleges in the learning city of Beijing provide access to learning for older people, with a focus on citizenship education, retirement and leisure activities combined with cultural arts (e.g. tea making, herbal medicine, instrumental music, singing) and crafts (e.g. traditional cooking, paper cutting, healing massage). A report on a 2018 visit to Beijing Shijingshan Community College shows the purposeful nature and community outreach of these learning opportunities (Reghenzani-Kearns, 2018).

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<sup>115</sup> <https://50plus.or.kr/org/eng.do>

### Japan's *kominkans*

In Japan, the key role of the large network of *kominkans* (community learning centres) may be taken as an example of how existing premises can be used to support the inclusion objectives of learning cities and have the potential to be developed further as a key foundation of the emerging longevity society. Makino (2018) described the important role of the *kominkan* as 'a social infrastructure which creates the path to a new autonomy for residents' (ibid., p. 17). This social role has become increasingly important in an ageing society, with a shift from being the place of culture and education to being the place where residents gather 'to help each other because this is required to rebuild the local community' (ibid.). We discuss this important social role below as 'the basis of a decentralised revitalisation of Japanese society' (ibid.) in the context of the 'small society' option for learning communities.

This echoes a policy of the Japanese Government, which, in 2017, established a Council for Designing a 100-Year Life Society. In launching the first meeting of the council, then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe described the challenge in the follow terms:

Human resources development (*Hito-zukuri*) in the lead-up to the 100-year life society is the focus of [the cabinet's] efforts to create a society in which all citizens are dynamically engaged. Together with the productivity revolution, this is one of the major themes for my administration (Prime Minister of Japan and his cabinet, 2017).

In June 2018, the council reported on its design for the Human Resources Development Revolution, in which it addressed the challenges of reforming the socio-economic system dramatically with a view to creating a 100-year life society.

### University of the Third Age (U3A)-type institutions

U3A-type institutions across China include approximately 60,000 entities for seniors and cater for 7 million learners (Kuan, 2018, pp. 22–26). The wider benefits of learning that support greater personal facility require advocacy (Reghenzani-Kearns, 2017): the UIL case studies of learning cities note a number of



good practice examples of learning city initiatives which have supported older people in the general framework of learning for all (UIL, 2015, 2017).

### *The partnership paradigm*

A further area in which the WHO provides useful insights for learning cities exists in its partnership arrangements. This can be seen in the key role played by its affiliates, who encourage their members to engage in age-friendly opportunities. This occurred, for example, in the agreement between WHO and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), which resulted in 205 cities establishing more age-friendly networks in America (WHO, 2018, p. 13). These arrangements include state governments as well as individual cities. For other examples, see **Table 3**.

**Table 3.** Partnerships that have led to an increase in age-friendly networks<sup>116</sup>

Country	Affiliate	Number of age-friendly cities in 2018
Spain	IMSERSO	137
France	Reseau Francophone	55
Canada	MADA Quebec	36
UK	UK Network	19
Ireland	Age Friendly Ireland	12

Source: *The authors, based on WHO, 2018, p.13.*

This approach can also be seen in the Australia regions of Victoria, Queensland and South Australia, where state governments have been important in the spread of age-friendly ideas to local government councils. In Victoria, for example, an agreement between the Victorian Government and the Municipal Association of Victoria led to an *Age-Friendly Victoria Declaration* on 14 April 2016 that

<sup>116</sup> IMSERSO is The Institute for the Elderly and Social Services, Reseau Francophone is the Network of Francophone Municipalities, MADA Quebec is the Age-Friendly Municipalities programme, and UK Network is the UK Network of Age-Friendly Communities.

was then signed by a large number of local government councils across the region (Victorian Government and MAV, 2016). The declaration included seven principles for an age-friendly society to which the councils committed: (1) supporting, (2) providing, (3) empowering, (4) encouraging, (5) addressing, (6) valuing, and (7) promoting (ibid.).

South Australia also provides a model of good practice, showing the influence of Alexandre Kalache, an international expert in this area, who was Thinker in Residence for the Council on the Ageing South Australia (COTA SA), Adelaide. The broad South Australian foundation to ageing well extended across the Office for the Ageing's Action Plan for 2014–2019 (Office for the Ageing, 2014a and 2014b), a strategy to safeguard the rights of older South Australians. A key feature was the longevity approach, which recognized that an ageing plan needs to bring whole-of-life perspectives. This approach derives from the initial Kalache (2013) report and the International Longevity Centre (ILC) 2015 platform. The Government of South Australia's latest iteration of strategy and priorities is its *Plan for Ageing Well 2020–2025*. It should be noted that almost all the age-friendly developments listed here have occurred in high-income countries. We discuss the challenge of finding relevant examples in low- and medium-income countries later in this chapter.

### *The new wave of innovation*

In recent years, there has been a new and often creative wave of innovation in urban development for fostering social justice, inclusion and sustainability objectives. This has been driven by:

- non-traditional partnerships that have crossed sectoral boundaries;
- longevity objectives, such as the 'hundred-year life';
- emerging concepts such as the 'small society', which provide innovative approaches to inclusion.

Each of these areas of implementation is relevant to the work of learning cities and provide 'lifelong learning for all' objectives that could be adopted by learning cities. The work of the United

Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland's Centre for Better Ageing provides a good example of the power of creative non-traditional partnerships. Examples include:

- an alliance with a range of partners, including the Design Council, to undertake projects on social entrepreneurship for older people, community and design, leading to the 2020 Transform Ageing Report;
- a partnership with the Greater Manchester City Council to build the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub, launched in 2017;
- a five-year partnership with Leeds City Council for age-friendly development;
- a partnership with the Design Council and the Social Care Institute on the hundred-year life: the role of housing, planning and design (SCIE, Centre for Ageing Better and Design Council, 2021).

### *The small-society approach*

We discussed the important social role of Japanese *kominkan* learning centres; similarly, there are grounds for exploring how the 'small society' approach can be taken further, perhaps in a learning city framework, as an approach to equity, inclusion and good ageing. *Volkshochschulen* ('folk high schools', VHS) centres in Germany play a similar role (Hinzen, 2018), with community learning centres existing in various forms elsewhere. In addition to the experience of these countries, learning neighbourhood projects exist in Cork and Limerick, Ireland, in the framework of learning city initiatives. There would be much value in a study of the outcomes of these projects, along with small society development in countries such as Japan and Germany.

These examples show where learning and community-building become necessary supports for localizing age-friendly principles. This role was already recognized by the WHO, and importance given to functional ability (such as learning, growing, making decisions and contributing), in its 2015 *World Report on Ageing and Health* (WHO, 2015). Cities such as Adelaide, Australia, and Manchester, UK, illustrate ways in which local consultations for implementing age-friendly initiatives provide opportunities for developing learning strategies that enhance the well-being of older people. This is reflected in the priorities determined fol-

lowing such community consultations in Adelaide, for example, where ‘home and community’, ‘meaningful communities’, and ‘navigating change’ were deemed the most important themes for strategy-building (Government of South Australia, 2020).

In Manchester, ‘developing age-friendly neighbourhoods’, ‘providing age-friendly services, and ‘promoting age equality’ topped the list (Manchester City Council, 2017). The Manchester approach also included ‘building life-time neighbourhoods catering for all ages’ and ‘giving seniors a voice through the VOP (Valuing Older People) Board’, which later became the Manchester Older People’s Board. This initiative later developed into the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub, whose innovative partnerships with the Centre for Better Ageing and Manchester universities, among others, have maintained the flow of new ideas (ibid.). Combining Manchester Council’s efforts with the city’s Adult Education Service Centres<sup>117</sup> can only strengthen the inclusion and equity for the older population. The city also funds several organizations under contract to deliver adult learning opportunities. It would seem that more groundwork is required (e.g. IT and interpreting) however; additionally, education-support related courses (e.g. family, parenting and tuition for children) could be expanded to embrace adult education for the full life course (ibid).

### **Barcelona, Spain**

Similar localization may be seen in other age-friendly initiatives, such as in Barcelona, Spain, whose Advisory Council for the Elderly (CAGG) partners with the Municipal Advisory Council of Universities to provide older people with lifelong learning opportunities (Barcelona City Council, 2021), and because of its leadership role in the International Association of Educating Cities (IAEC). These initiatives resulted in the development of the city’s 2018–2030 Strategy for Demographic Change and Ageing (ESPON, 2019). This active-ageing agenda facilitates access to education and culture, reduces the digital divide, enhances active participation in education and cultural activities throughout life, and contributes to city

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<sup>117</sup> See [https://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200004/adult\\_education/5854/adult\\_education\\_courses](https://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200004/adult_education/5854/adult_education_courses) [Accessed 11 October 2021].

council policies, including proper treatment of seniors and lifelong learning (ibid.). Barcelona also has an excellent and easily navigable Senior Advisory Council website, which illustrates how older people can engage in city provisions and programmes.<sup>118</sup> Many public centres and networks (such as libraries), municipally-funded groups and the university act as agents for lifelong learning. The information on the website also helps viewers understand why programmes are beneficial.

### **Modi'in-Maccabim-Re'ut, Israel**

The city of Modi'in adopted a bottom-up pilot project as part of the Israeli Center for Learning Cities (ICLC)<sup>119</sup> to incubate and accelerate lifelong learning infrastructure according to learning city principles meeting the needs of young and old. With an emphasis on social inclusion, the centre's policy designs specifically attend to older populations through its business method of 'improvement teams' (LCN, 2021). Active citizenship is a strategy that mobilizes inclusion for citizens and partners to shape quality of life. Various departments of the municipality assist with pathways for older people. Some of these pathways include lessening isolation and loneliness with 'hallway meetings' to maintain connection, relevance and discussion; ensuring access to libraries and supermarkets; and raising awareness of well-being and health through leisure activities in city parks. The establishment of an activity centre, senior citizens' club, and programmes for Holocaust survivors are avenues to cater to this growing demographic (ibid.).

Overcoming ageism is a concern in Modi'in; the reintegration of adults at work has therefore become the focus of the 'Mid-way Project' within the Multi-Age Employment Program, which targets citizens aged 45 to 75 years old. Understanding the direct correlation between economic productivity and learning, this effort also promotes entrepreneurial thinking, capacities development and crisis management in helping this 'early' older cohort maintain relevance and liveliness as a citizen adapting in a dynamic society (ibid.).

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118 See <https://www.barcelona.cat/en/living-in-bcn/with-elderly-people> [Accessed 11 October 2021].

119 See <http://lcn.pascalobservatory.org/participants/iclc> [Accessed 11 October 2021].

### *Supporting development towards learning city recognition*

The following cities, mainly from low- and lower-to-middle-income countries, are also at various stages of development towards recognition as learning cities supporting inclusion for older people.

Cotonou in Benin, West Africa, illustrates the situation of a number of cities in developing countries in Africa, Central and East Asia, the South Pacific and the Caribbean. While a National Policy for Active Ageing was developed in 2007, a lack of resources and lifelong learning policies has hampered progress (Zinsou, 2009). Cotonou is fostering its development as a potential learning city by participating in the PASCAL EcCoWell Community Recovery Program (Biao, 2020).

In Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic (DR), the International Longevity Centre (ILC)<sup>120</sup> promotes longevity objectives for older people. The DR has a Code of Rights for Older Dominicans, a National Council for Older Persons (CONAPE) and a Business Action for Education (EDUCA) initiative. These developments are supported by international funding from organizations such as HelpAge International and corporate and church partners. There are foundations in the Dominican Republic that could support development towards harnessing lifelong learning to progress longevity objectives. (ILC-DR, 2015).

South Delhi, India, meanwhile, is a participant in the WHO Age-friendly Cities Network and is also involved in the Centre for Sustainable Healthy Learning Cities (SHLC) initiative led by Glasgow University, supported by a consortium of other universities. SHLC programme observations by participating educators give a contemporary portrait of diversity in South Delhi,<sup>121</sup> with poverty in some neighbourhoods calling for a concerted 'attack' in slum districts (Hague, 2019). This raises the question of whether learning

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120 See <https://www.ilc-alliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ILC-DR-Biennial-Report-2015-17.pdf> [Accessed 11 October 2021].

121 <http://www.centreforsustainablecities.ac.uk/news/delhi-city-spread-new-neighbourhoods/> [Accessed 11 October 2021].

neighbourhood strategies could be adapted to the needs of these poor neighbourhoods.

## Data collection and monitoring

In recent years, there has been an increase in data collection and monitoring relevant to ageing populations, particularly in high-income countries, linked to the expansion of age-friendly objectives the establishment of new standards for inclusion such as the Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities (Cities For All, 2016), and the overall monitoring of the SDGs. In addition, the growing interest in longevity and ‘whole of society’ perspectives has brought with it an interest in measuring how countries are adapting to societal ageing. This has led to an Aging Society Index (Chen et al., 2018) that has been applied in OECD countries, and a similar development in China at the city level. These developments in data collection and monitoring are likely to support sharper, more clearly defined policy responses, although large disparities exist between activity in developing and developed countries.

### Measuring how societies adapt to societal ageing

The shift in thinking from how individuals age to broader perspectives on how each society is successfully adapting to population ageing has been accompanied by an interest in how well countries are adapting to societal ageing (Goldman et al., 2018). This has led the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on an Aging Society to undertake a study to determine the dimensions to be monitored, and then developing an Aging Society Index to be applied to OECD countries using OECD data. The five major components for the successful ageing society were determined as being (1) productivity, (2) well-being, (3) equity, (4) cohesion, and (5) security and engagement (Chen et al., 2015).

While these components reflect some aspects of the WHO’s work on ageing, the inclusion of well-being, equity and cohesion brings broader societal perspectives more aligned with the SDGs, the Medellín Manifesto, and a future agenda for learning cities

implementing the manifesto when developing a longevity society. While OECD countries differed in their performance across the components of the index, Norway and Sweden performed best overall followed by the United States, the Netherlands and Japan. These rankings were similar to the annual *World Happiness Report* results (Helliwell, J. F. et al., 2020), except for the better performance of the United States in the ageing index.

### **The ‘blue book of ageing’ in China**

A somewhat similar index was developed in China by the National Interdisciplinary Institute on Aging (NIIA) at Southwest Jiaotong University (SWJTU). Like the US index, there were five components: (1) healthcare, (2) transportation, (3) economy and finance, (4) human settlement, and (5) social equity.

The index was applied in 38 cities across China, and the results showed a clear regional divide between the stronger economies of cities in the east, such as Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shanghai and Beijing, and the poorer performance of inland cities with less economic development. Overall, the study concluded that (1) there was a low level of urban infrastructure oriented towards older people, and (2) there was a lack of tolerance towards older people in society (Yang, Dong and Feng, 2018, pp. 3-4). The seriousness of the ageing problem in China, particularly from health, welfare and urban development perspectives, was shown to be a ‘sunrise industry’ needing rapid attention at the 2020 Tsinghua International Symposium on Biological Structure and Aging conducted by Tsinghua University (Reghenzani-Kearns, 2019).

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

Ideas have been transformative throughout history and have sparked some of the greatest transformational movements of the last two centuries (Sachs, 2015, pp. 507).

The longevity revolution has brought a global agenda for learning cities, with many partners, to address the structural features of the longevity life. The Global Agenda for a New Map of Life framed



by the Stanford Center on Longevity comprises goals similar to that of the Medellín Manifesto, including:

- Build consensus on how to launch global and regional initiatives in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australasia and Europe under a shared global vision;
- Create a general framework and set of principles which outline societal and individual changes.

The progress to longevity societies for all ages involves more integrated provision of services with a focus on the client, often enabled by digital technologies, so that such emerging ecosystems can withstand future challenges. Developments in the area of mental health and well-being illustrate these trends, as well as the unmet needs still existing (Australian Government, Productivity Commission, 2019; Kearns and Lido, 2020). A recent McKinsey Global Institute discussion paper forecast this development with the next wave of healthcare innovation as ‘the evolution of ecosystems’ (Singhal et al., 2020). The solution to the inclusion dilemmas of our present society will come through the emergence of ‘societies for all ages’, with stronger and more cohesive communities, services that are more integrated and client-focussed, and an empathic learning culture that bonds these dimensions together for a sustainable future. Lifelong learning will have a new agenda.

### **Learning cities address key structural features of the longevity life**

In their 2009 *Learning Through Life Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning*, Schuller and Watson devoted a chapter to the new model for the educational life course. While they recognized the need to go beyond the traditional educational life course ending

‘Lifelong learning will have a new agenda.’

with retirement, their four-stage model of (1) under-25, (2) 25 to 50, (3) 50 to 75, and (4) 75+ years may need to be reimagined in the longevity era ‘with recursive process and many interconnected stages’, and with countries at different stages in the transition to the longevity life (ibid.).

It is likely that the following questions and topics will need to be addressed in a number of stages:

- In what ways can learning resources and strategies support the key transition points in the longevity life?
- How can lifelong learning principles and policies be reimagined and adapted to the longevity life course?
- In what ways can cohesive relations between the generations in the longevity life course be fostered, with an initial priority to relations between youth and older people?
- The need to move beyond a ‘front-end model’ for roles of the education sectors.
- The need to rethink educational qualifications for the longevity life course.
- The need to rethink vocational training and qualifications for the longevity life course.

While development towards a new vision for lifelong learning supporting the longevity life is likely to require development over a period of time, recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic provides an opportunity to reimagine the future longevity life course and take some steps towards this vision. UNESCO has set up an International Commission on Futures of Education to ‘reimagine how knowledge and learning can shape the future of humanity in a context of increasing complexity, uncertainty and precarity’ (UNESCO, 2021). Rethinking the role and structures of lifelong learning in the longevity life course is a significant aspect of this challenge for learning cities – and all education sectors – as a contribution to the challenge of the future of education in a just, sustainable world.<sup>122</sup> The question of inclusion, equity and lifelong learning

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122 Schuller, Osborne and Biao have written a PASCAL EcCoWell Briefing Paper, Rethinking Lifelong Learning within Current Contexts of Time and Space, which is available on the PASCAL website: <http://lcn.pascalobservatory.org/pascalnow/pascal-activities/news/eccowell-2-briefing-paper-7-rethinking-lifelong-learning-within-cur> [Accessed 11 October 2021].

for the ageing populations has been caught up in one of the great transformations in human history: the progression to a longevity society. The opportunity exists to reimagine the role of learning throughout life in ways that foster equity and social justice in a sustainable society and that build community.

While much has been achieved in building age-friendly communities, the role of learning in later life has been marginalized and needs to be reasserted through non-traditional partnerships and networks. This needs to be accompanied by action to bring meaning and purpose back into later life so that personal fulfilment remains a principle of ageing well, as the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA, 1991) recognized in its Principles for Older Persons. 'Learning to be' should remain a core principle for ageing well in the longevity society that embraces:

**Inclusion** for equality, social justice, strong communities and a growing empathic consciousness. This should be a fundamental principle of the longevity society – a sustainable future requires this.

**Partnership** should be the modus operandi in building learning cities down to grassroots collaboration in learning neighbourhoods and organizations such as *komikans* in Japan, VHS in Germany and many others. The 'small society' may be the path to a sustainable future where inclusion is the norm.

'The opportunity exists to reimagine the role of learning throughout life in ways that foster equity and social justice in a sustainable society and that build community.'

**Integration** is as a keyword in building the longevity society. This will require considerable cultural change, vision and leadership – particularly in local communities, where the foundations of good mental health and well-being are laid. Innovative pilot projects such as the Sustainable Housing Leadership Consortium (SHLC) are needed, along with exchanges of information and experiences facilitated by organizations such as UIL, PASCAL and many others in civil society.

**Technology** can contribute much. The success of webinars and online classes during the pandemic confirms this. Inclusion requires that all seniors are digitally literate. There is a legacy of past neglect to overcome. Partnerships programmes such as Tech Savvy Seniors, which operates between Australia’s largest 5G network, Telstra, and state public libraries, point the way.

**Learning cities** need to adapt to the longevity society. This requires deepening age-friendly principles with built-in learning and community strategies at every stage in the life course. An early priority is to build understanding and collaboration between young people and seniors. Some innovative good practice models exist that need to be extended more widely and supplemented with essential opportunities for later life learners to pursue their own interests.

**Partnerships** between health, education and environmental authorities should be an early priority. This will connect age-friendly practices with developing local and global consciousness and citizenship, fostered through local community learning institutions and other education partnerships, to give substance to the *Cork Call to Action for Learning Cities* (UIL, 2017).

**Meaningful connections** need to be one of the guiding principles for ageing well. This provides identity capital, value and purpose in later life. Having a life that matters is reinforced by positive psychology exponents.

**Neighbourhoods** should be designed to facilitate connections between people, including seniors. Libraries and cultural institutions

and places where older people gather take on a larger role in the longevity society.

**Heritage learning** can contribute much for older people in conveying connections to their past (the value of storytelling), enhancing the consciousness of the present and reimagining the future.

**Mental health and well-being** are key objectives for ageing societies to overcome debility and loneliness.

The *Medellín Manifesto: Learning Cities for Inclusion* (UIL, 2019) remains a timely document. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic soon after its adoption has made implementation of its principles both more difficult and, paradoxically, easier. While social justice and inclusion may not be the top priorities for places in recovery, with a focus on jobs and economic regeneration, the surge of sociability seen widely across pandemic-stricken countries reflects deep instincts in the human psyche. This speaks to the very real possibility of ‘recovering better’ for rebuilding, resilience, reflection and renewal.

Cities are at the tipping point in this moral conflict between ‘back to the same’ and ‘recovering better’. The decline in social coherence and social capital across the world needs to be reversed if there is to be a sustainable recovery. Progressing the UN Sustainable Development Goals in this turbulent context is a test we must not fail. Economic recovery needs a social renaissance in unison to be sustainable.

‘Recovering better’ from the COVID-19 pandemic requires, as noted recently by the Secretary-General of the OECD, policies and strategies to address the three big transitions people everywhere are facing: climate change, digitalization and population ageing (OECD, 2020). This social renaissance needs to encompass learning throughout life in the changing life course in this era of longevity. There are many examples of good practice, some of which we have cited, but they must be connected with more integrated development. Enhanced lifelong learning and personal fulfilment are

the missing dimensions in many of the regional and city plans for ageing. This should instead be the era of the evolving triple helix, where learning, health and civic/personal fulfilment are deeply entwined at all levels of progression towards a better, sustainable world. While the steps may be gradual, the outcome will be a new map of life.

There will be a fundamental redesign of life; while the process is gradual and has already been ongoing for many years, it will culminate in a social and economic revolution (Gratton and Scott, 2017).

The era of longevity could prove to be the era of opportunity for steps towards a sustainable, empathic civilization.

## Recommendations

1. Learning cities should adopt a longevity dimension in their approach to population ageing, which should be seen in positive and productive terms typically using a life-course approach, so that societies can adapt to the longevity revolution while also supporting the well-being and productivity of older people.
2. In adopting a longevity approach, learning cities should recognize changes in the life course in many countries as a recursive process with many interconnected stages requiring greater flexibility and agility, with learning and partnership-building throughout all stages as a key feature.
3. Lifelong learning policies and practices should be adapted to the realities of the longevity era with people supported through all life stages, including key transitions in maintaining their employability, sense of identity, and overall mental health and well-being.
4. Building community in local neighbourhoods through cross-sectoral partnerships is vital to progress social justice and equity objectives, support inclusion for vulnerable groups, and build a sustainable learning culture from the grassroots up. Local government should support these developments.
5. Community learning centres such as *kominkan* in Japan and VHS in Germany should have a key role in supporting learning cities in the transition to the longevity era and should be built into strategic planning for learning city development.
6. A longevity approach should be directed at bringing meaning and purpose to the lives of vulnerable groups in ageing, through em-

- powerment strategies linked to positive and productive approaches in local community projects, enterprise and skills development.
7. Broadened cross-sectoral partnerships at all levels should be a feature of learning cities in adapting to the challenge of the longevity era, with cohesion as a prime objective, both in neighbourhoods and cities, and in intergenerational relations.
  8. Intergenerational understanding and collaboration should be the key objectives for learning cities in the longevity era, with understanding and collaboration between youth and seniors an early priority.
  9. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Hamburg, Germany, should consolidate research and good practice cases on learning and community-building in later life to support healthy ageing, social justice and personal fulfilment.
  10. Supporting cities in Africa and other low-income countries to develop good, healthy ageing practices should be another priority for UIL in partnership with health, urban development and environmental agencies, and education institutions.
  11. UIL should examine the experiences of selected local learning centres and learning neighbourhood initiatives to assess the value of small society approaches to inclusion, learning and well-being objectives in a range of contexts.
  12. In implementing the Medellín Manifesto, learning cities should regard the Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020–2030 (WHO, 2021) and the Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities (Cities For All, 2016) to take advantage of synergies between shared cross-sectoral objectives that add value to the lives of people in the process of building a society for all ages where inclusion is a normal feature.

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## Final conclusion and recommendations

Many of the preceding chapters addressed specific vulnerable groups by analysing their circumstances, presenting examples of existing city-level policies and practices targeting those groups, and concluding with a series of recommendations to enhance their inclusion in lifelong learning. Significant differences notwithstanding, there is a commonality across groups: a risk of exclusion from learning opportunities. It is also true that, on a granular level, there is more complexity in how individuals are excluded from learning, and many experience more than one form of individual and situational disadvantage. As some of the examples featured in this publication have shown, a lifelong learning policy or practice may simultaneously support the inclusion of different vulnerable groups. Additionally, lifelong learning initiatives can ameliorate vulnerabilities caused by locational factors if they also aim for community development.

Nevertheless, while acknowledging that a broad spectrum of vulnerabilities exists across populations, it can be useful to identify specific vulnerable groups, defined according to issues, in order to highlight policies and practices across world regions that share similar objectives. In this publication, a number of groups have been presented in turn: digitally excluded populations; youth at risk (NEETs); persons with disabilities; migrants, refugees and IDPs, and older persons. This list of groups is not exhaustive, each group is in itself diverse, and one individual may be regarded as belonging to several groups at the same time; nevertheless, a methodical look at the contexts, policies, practices and challenges for these groups reveals some manifestations of exclusion and inclusion in cities.

In most cities, there are people who are excluded from learning by either an absence of digital infrastructure or a deficit in digital skills – and often both. In this publication, they have been collectively termed ‘digitally excluded populations’. Exclusion is exacerbated by digital divides that have emerged between social groups and generations, leading in some contexts to clear correlations

between demography and digital competence. Measures to promote digital inclusion in cities are often centred on infrastructure by identifying where digital access is absent and where current infrastructure needs upgrading, or they address skills development in the areas of digital literacy and data literacy. Policies and practices may reach out to specific sub-groups of digitally excluded populations by, for example, targeting elderly learners or those with low levels of literacy. Of course, the development of digital infrastructure requires significant financial investments in technology, and the pace of digital change presents an added challenge for digitally excluded populations: competencies are quickly outdated as technologies evolve, particularly in the world of work.

For youth at risk (NEETs), it is clear that a holistic, cross-sectoral approach for this group's inclusion in cities can be facilitated by a comprehensive NEETs plan, as in the case of York, UK. Individual policies and practices tend to aim either at preventing young people from becoming 'NEETs' – by, for example, supporting school-to-work transitions – or re-engaging young people who have already fallen out of education, employment and training. For this, community outreach initiatives raise awareness and facilitate pathways back into structured learning or work. Echoing a challenge common to vulnerable groups, insufficient disaggregated data on sub-groups impedes informed planning for youth at risk, while problems with responsibility, coordination and accountability hamper implementation.

Persons with disabilities have for a long time faced exclusion due to insufficient levels of accessibility in cities. This concern is tied to physical infrastructure: cities have a duty to ensure that shared spaces can be reached by all. For many persons with disabilities, inclusion is thus inextricably linked to accessibility, yet cities must go further and guarantee social inclusion. This requires their full involvement in lifelong learning opportunities, whether disabilities are physical or cognitive. A crucial foundation is the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in schools, which has been the focus of international, national and local policies for many years, but there is still a great deal of work to be done. There



is some evidence of similar initiatives in non-formal and informal learning modalities and other learning spaces, but more research and targeted interventions are needed.

Migrants are also vulnerable to exclusion. Again, this group of people is diverse and encompasses those who migrate within the same country or across national borders for a variety of reasons, including people who are forcibly displaced as a result of conflict or another form of instability. Policies and practices for the inclusion of migrants generally reflect the concepts of social inclusion and inclusive education, by for example supporting migrants who have recently arrived to become familiar with their new environment and gain access to basic services, or arranging targeted language classes for migrants of different ages, or developing mechanisms to admit undocumented children into local schools. Coordination is a challenge, as is the mobilization of financial investment and resources. Another important consideration for the inclusion of migrants is quality education: learning institutions, curricula and educators need to be sensitive to cultural differences and able to adapt to the learning needs of people whose national, social, cultural and educational backgrounds are likely to differ significantly.

Ageing populations have often been overlooked by policy-makers and programme providers responsible for creating lifelong learning opportunities in cities, but this is starting to change. Emerging concepts such as healthy ageing, coupled with demographic changes in some parts of the world, have resulted in a new emphasis on the learning needs of ageing populations and have precipitated a move towards a more inclusive approach. For example, a new wave of innovation in urban development has advanced ideas of social justice and witnessed the forging of non-traditional partnerships, while the ‘small society’ approach evident in cities across Japan and the Republic of Korea has had a positive impact on ageing populations’ lifelong learning opportunities. Now, a paradigmatic shift towards a longevity approach, with an emphasis on learning throughout the whole life course, is needed in cities worldwide.

In 2020, UIL published a new report setting out a future-focused vision of education and demanding a major shift towards a culture of lifelong learning by 2050. One of the 10 key messages of the report – all of which are critical for creating a culture of lifelong learning – is to place vulnerable groups at the core of the lifelong learning policy agenda. Part of this argument is restated below.

To foster an inclusive and just society, vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups must be placed at the core of the lifelong learning policy agenda. This not only involves targeted policies and instruments, but also mainstreaming this focus in the entire legal, policy, delivery and funding framework.

As lifelong learning includes a diversity of learning modalities, people currently excluded due to a lack of access to accredited formal education should be able to join accredited non-formal and informal learning modalities.

As a component of lifelong learning, inclusive education encourages an active role and the participation of learners, their families and their communities. Inclusivity can be assured by cocreating and co-designing with learners in order to meet their demands, especially by designing learning opportunities for and with the most excluded. In general, learning opportunities should value interdisciplinarity and physical, cognitive and emotional diversity. They should be built on the learner's needs and adapted to local contexts, thereby taking the diversity of backgrounds in terms of location, age, gender, status, religion and abilities, as a starting point rather than as an obstacle<sup>123</sup>

These points are highly relevant to inclusive lifelong learning in cities, and so the recommendations from this part of the report are worth repeating here, though with adaptations so that each point directly applies to the city level.

- **Engage learners and educators in planning strategies:** The participation of learners and educators in planning is necessary to ensure demands and needs (especially of the most vulnerable) are met. Adopting holistic approaches when co-designing and coordinating programmes and strategies in cities will contribute to addressing

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123 UIL. 2020. Embracing a culture of lifelong learning. Contribution to the Futures of Education initiative. Report: A transdisciplinary expert consultation. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374112/PDF/374112eng.pdf.multi> [Accessed 12 October 2021].

learning needs and demands in a comprehensive manner.

- Launch national campaigns to engage vulnerable groups: Launching local campaigns involving intersectoral groups of stakeholders can be instrumental in making policies and programmes participatory. Such campaigns require funding from multiple stakeholders, though with a coordinating role reserved for the state, accessible according to specific needs (high level of immigration, elderly population, illiterate population).
- Study innovative strategies and programmes to identify successful schemes and disseminate the results: Inclusion remains an under-researched yet significant topic for lifelong learning and sustainable development, and this publication has gone some way towards remedying this issue. Nevertheless, more information is needed to locate promising initiatives, and research is key to identifying successful schemes, to advocate and to disseminate. Cities should continue to network with and learn from each other in the area of inclusive lifelong learning, analysing policies and programmes that have been successfully implemented elsewhere and identifying those elements that might be applicable to that city's context.

Two further recommendations, which appear elsewhere in the report and are also prerequisites for a culture of lifelong learning, are also relevant to inclusive lifelong learning in cities. Together with the preceding recommendations, they contribute at the local level towards reaching the goal emphasized in the report: embracing a culture of lifelong learning.

- Place digital technology at the service of lifelong learning for all: In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the exceptional reorganization of education services has created a worldwide maelstrom of experiment and innovation. Channelling that spirit through a long-term structured initiative could convert ad hoc responses into transformative educational and learning infrastructure and provisions. Cities could prolong the initiatives it put in place in response to the COVID-19 health crisis, forging them into a permanent initiative aimed at putting digital technology at the service of lifelong learning for all.
- Renew community spaces for learning opportunities: Encourage and support local lifelong learning initiatives by renewing community spaces for learning opportunities. Many existing (public) spaces, especially public libraries, museums, community centres and religious

venues, are already entry points for continued education. As they already host learning communities and opportunities, they could be supported and tasked to further engage in that direction.

Each of these recommendations can be implemented individually, through bespoke policies and programmes to enhance inclusion. Ultimately, however, a holistic, cross-cutting policy for inclusive lifelong learning at the city level is needed to join up the dots. This publication has provided a starting point for this endeavour by cementing inclusion as a principle for lifelong learning and sustainable cities. The global trend of urbanization is already bringing a profound impact to bear upon people's lives and the planet itself. For it to proceed sustainably, all city dwellers will require access to learning opportunities; this is why the principle of inclusion is paramount. Efforts at the local level to include and involve all individuals in lifelong learning opportunities not only transforms cities, but also fuels national development and aids the achievement of global goals in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



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