



“We risk a massive reversal of the ecological and societal gains already made since the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the Agenda 2030 were adopted. The COVID-19 pandemic only further stresses out the importance of urbanization for the future of international relations.”

– Dirk ASSMANN, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, Bonn

Image Source: Wikimedia Commons. April 2, 2020. President Tsai Ing-wen inspects the Central Epidemic Command Center. Image by Office of the President.
https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:04.02_49726568957_66543b616e_o.jpg



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International cooperation for the urban age

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Urban development plays already an increasing role in international development cooperation, but the pandemic will make this more important. Since the beginning of the pandemic, mainly cities and urban communities, including wealthy global cities, suffer from cascading challenges of higher public expenditures, delayed investments, and plummeting revenues, with consequences on large segments of the industry such as the building and construction sector, transport and mobility or tourism and culture. If the urban recovery process in the world is not managed to be sustainable and green, there is a risk of following hardly reversible development paths, with severe negative effects for future generations and the planet.

At the same time, the many economic stimulus packages present a historic opportunity to shape the megatrend

of urbanization and to effectively tackle climate change at local level, contribute to poverty reduction and green economic development. GIZ is a leading Technical Assistance agency, aims to contribute to this with focus on the alignment of the recovery measures for post-Covid-19 future with the needs derived from the SDG's and the Paris Climate Agreement.

We know from GIZ's daily work that the political will at the national level for a targeted approach to urban development and urbanization varies greatly. National urban development policies are an important tool achieving policy coherence, coordinating relevant actors and levels of government, and ultimately ensuring effective use of resources for sustainable urban development. At the same time, at GIZ, we experience that the universal designs for solutions need to be reconciled with the diversity of local contexts and the power of local actors. There are rarely on size fits all solutions. We see for example how universal infrastructure designs proved ineffective for specific local conditions. The importance of and the way in which urban development is handled also depends, among other things, on the degree of decentralization (i.e. the transfer of decision-making powers and resources to subnational levels), financial autonomy and on the political will of the respective countries to recognize the role of cities as key development actors. In this respect, it is shown that it is the ability of local decision makers and implementers to solve problems in dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic that counts, an

evidence has emerged on which we all need to build.

At the local level, the focus of GIZ is on strengthening municipalities and urban operating companies in the planning, financing and implementation of measures for sustainable and climate-friendly urban development. When it comes to infrastructure development, our experience shows that poorly planned projects that are not adapted to local conditions and needs do not deliver the desired results, burden the budget and limit the financial scope for urban investment over many years. Cities must therefore be able to prepare independently meaningful projects for sustainable urban development in such a way that they are financially viable and sustainable to manage.

Given the current crises caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, we risk a massive reversal of ecological and societal gains already made since the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the Agenda 2030 were adopted. Against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of urbanization is reinforced once again. To list Urbanization and Urban Development as an overarching funding category of the Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) would reflect the major role urbanization has for the effectiveness of the future development cooperation and would help monitor achievements made on SDG11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities.