

PROGRESS REPORT

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 11 TARGET 11.1

“By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums”

Report by
Habitat for Humanity International



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1. Executive summary

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to achieve the global goal of ending poverty and other deprivations by the implementation of 17 Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs. Progress toward each of the SDGs is measured through a monitoring framework that contains 169 targets and 231 indicators.¹ More than five years after the launch of the SDG framework, we are now in the “Decade of Action,” during which the SDGs are to be achieved by 2030. According to the 2019 U.N. High-Level Political Forum, or HLPF, the SDGs are far from being achieved. The 2020 HLPF highlighted that inequalities among and within countries have deepened, and progress toward the SDGs has been delayed or reversed as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Habitat for Humanity, with the vision of creating a world where everyone has a decent place to live, works toward the recognition of housing as a platform for sustainable development and emphasizes the central role of housing in building better cities. Habitat has encouraged member states to include adequate housing in the Agenda 2030 and has promoted programs and policies to achieve progress toward goals and targets related to housing.

This report gives an overview of the global effort toward achieving SDG 11, which seeks to “*Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*,” focusing on Target 11.1 — “*By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums*” — and the Indicator 11.1.1: “*Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing*.” This report relies on desk research and a review of literature from online sources and reports by U.N. agencies, multilateral bodies and civil society, including UN-HABITAT, Cities Alliance, U.N. Environment Programme, U.N. Development Programme, World Bank, Voluntary National Reviews and Voluntary Local Reviews, mainly from 2018 to 2020. The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for Target 11.1 are not considered in the analyses of this report.²

The report first discusses the components of Indicator 11.1.1 and their measurement, then analyses progress according to available data. It also provides national and local perspectives from areas with the most pronounced negative and positive trends. It also discusses some of the critical issues concerning progress or regression on Target 11.1. Based on available forecasts, it considers the future need for adequate housing through projections on slum dweller population for 2030. Finally, it presents recommendations for further action on the basis of its findings.

At the U.N. HLPF in 2020, it was made clear that Target 11.1 is one of the five targets that is regressing (out of 35 measured of 161 in total). The proportion of the world’s urban population living in slums grew to 24% by 2018, compared with the previous decrease from 28% to 23% between 2000 and 2014. The absolute number of the urban slum population continued to increase, and by 2018 it exceeded 1 billion, with the largest slum and informal settlement dweller

¹ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>

² Habitat for Humanity International. HFHI — Policy Discussion Brief Outline: Steffen Wetzstein, (2021).

populations in East and Southeast Asia (370 million), Sub-Saharan Africa (238 million) and Central and South Asia (227 million). While slums are mostly concentrated in developing countries, lack of housing affordability affects people in developed countries as well. Projections for 2030 estimate a further increase in the number of slum dwellers to 1.2 billion, with the largest proportional increase occurring in Africa. With these facts in mind and recognizing the anticipated long-term global impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, regression and lack of progress toward achieving Target 11.1 is likely to continue if no additional efforts are taken.

This report attributes the main causes of the lack of progress within SDG 11.1 to population growth, rapid urbanisation, natural population increase, climate change impact, migration, political and economic instability, systemic inequalities, ineffective urban planning, local governance, land and housing policies, and housing finance instruments.

Additional critical issues considered include the lack of prioritization of housing in development programs, including the lack of adequate funding, lack of recognition of the complexity of the housing ecosystem, lack of coordination and collaboration between stakeholders, including at different levels of governance, and dependency of progress in Goal 11 from progress on other goals (such as SDG 1: No poverty, SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation, SDG 8: Decent work, SDG 10: Reduced inequalities, and SDG 13: Climate action). Furthermore, shortcomings of data collection and reporting are identified as a critical issue, especially in terms of the lack of updated global data on housing affordability and underreporting of Target 11.1 in the global monitoring framework, which drives attention and resources away from the problem.

This paper argues that cities have a defining role in global sustainable development³ because of their social and economic weight and connections beyond their boundaries. The population of urban slums and informal settlements is a major contributor to cities' social, economic and environmental landscape and development opportunities. Therefore, progress in SDG 11 and Target 11.1 is directly or indirectly a driver for achieving the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Habitat for Humanity believes that we can achieve better outcomes and greater impact if the global housing challenge is addressed with people at the centre, especially the most vulnerable, and is implemented through people-public-private partnerships and with a deeper understanding of the entire housing ecosystem.

Specific recommendations, elaborated on in the final section of this paper, include:

- Positioning **housing at the center** of programs and policies concerning cities, for building better and more sustainable cities and communities, including the provision of adequate funding for interventions.
- Application of a **housing ecosystems perspective** in the planning, design, implementation and monitoring of housing interventions, including the understanding of needs and priorities of low-income families, existing capacity and resources of local governments, market conditions and the policy environment. Solutions require integrated interventions.
- Building and maintaining strong **people-public-private partnerships** in the design, implementation and monitoring of interventions at all levels, including institutionalized forms of public participation.

³ Habitat for Humanity. "Policy Brief: Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 11," January 2020. https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/policy-brief_Achieving-SDG11.pdf.

- **Improvement of data collection, reporting and monitoring** concerning Target 11.1, especially concerning housing affordability, disaggregated data on housing adequacy criteria, and a composite index for Indicator 11.1.1, and more frequent and thorough national and local reporting.

2. Target 11.1 background and progress

Throughout its history, Habitat for Humanity International has engaged with multilateral institutions to elevate the importance of housing as a platform for achieving development. Through the Millennium Development Goals, during the preparations for the post-2015 agenda and the drafting of the Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs⁴, Habitat for Humanity International encouraged member states to recognize and include adequate and affordable housing in the priorities of global development.⁵ Specifically, Habitat for Humanity worked to help define the indicators of SDG 11 — “*Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*” — Target 11.1 — “*By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums*” — and supported classification of Indicator 11.1.1 — “*Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing*” — as a Tier 1 indicator.⁶ Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, Habitat for Humanity International has supported the global effort toward achieving the SDGs. As a housing organization, Habitat for Humanity has focused on goals, targets and indicators relevant to housing and land, with a particular focus on SDG 11.⁷ Habitat for Humanity has also been engaging directly in the High-Level Political Forum, or HLPF, process since 2017 to ensure SDGs related to housing and access to land, particularly the aforementioned SDG 11 and especially Target 11.1, are implemented and reported on. The custodial agency responsible for tracking the target is UN-HABITAT, and the latest review of Target 11.1 was conducted in 2018. Updates of various SDGs are expected in three- to five-year intervals.

According to analysis conducted for HLPF 2020, **Target 11.1.1 is one of the five targets that are globally regressing**, out of 35 targets that had sufficient up-to-date data to track global progress, from the total of 169 SDG targets in the monitoring framework.⁸ The “Sustainable Development Goals Progress Chart 2020” (Fig.1), compiled by the United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, shows deterioration of the target at the global level. Notably, the review covered only the first component of the indicator: “proportion of urban population living in slums,” and **did not include data on the second component of the indicator: inadequate housing, to be measured through housing affordability**. It also shows a clear divide between developed countries — where the target is met, or almost met, according to reporting from national-level data — and regions where developing countries are concentrated. Moreover, the global trend hides regional differences. Although the data show some progress in the proportion of urban slum dwellers in Central and South Asia and East and Southeast Asia; limited or no progress was seen in the proportion of slum dwellers in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Pacific Island countries, and negative trends in the

⁴ Habitat for Humanity. “Elevating Housing in the Post-2015 Development Agenda,” (2013). <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjS9ozrjpHvAhXyJMUKHfqwBi4QFjAAegQIAhAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsustainabledevelopment.un.org%2FgetWSDoc.php%3Fid%3D2588&usq=AOvVaw2hsTTqxyOFIwdlcBshzDI7>

⁵ Habitat for Humanity. “Housing Indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals,” (2019). <http://globalhousingindicators.org/sites/globalhousingindicators.org/files/HFHI%20Statement%20on%20SDG%20Housing%20Indicators.pdf>

⁶ Indicators classified as Tier 1 meet the following criteria: “Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, and data are regularly produced by countries for at least 50 per cent of countries and of the population in every region where the indicator is relevant.” (UN DESA (2020) IAEG-SDGs Tier Classification for Global SDG Indicators <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/tier-classification/>)

⁷ Habitat for Humanity International. „Habitat for Humanity Applauds Inclusion of Goal Addressing Urbanization and Adequate Housing in New Sustainable Development Goals,” (2015).

⁸ Gapminder (2020) SDG Moments 2020 <https://www.gapminder.org/sdg/>; https://gapm.io/SDG_download_slides, referred webpages last accessed on Sept. 2, 2021.

proportion of slum dwellers are reported in North Africa and Western Asia. The **global regression in the proportion of urban slum population is derived mainly from North Africa and Western Asia, along with a slight regression in Sub-Saharan Africa.** The data and the way in which this target is measured are reviewed in additional detail in Section 2.1.

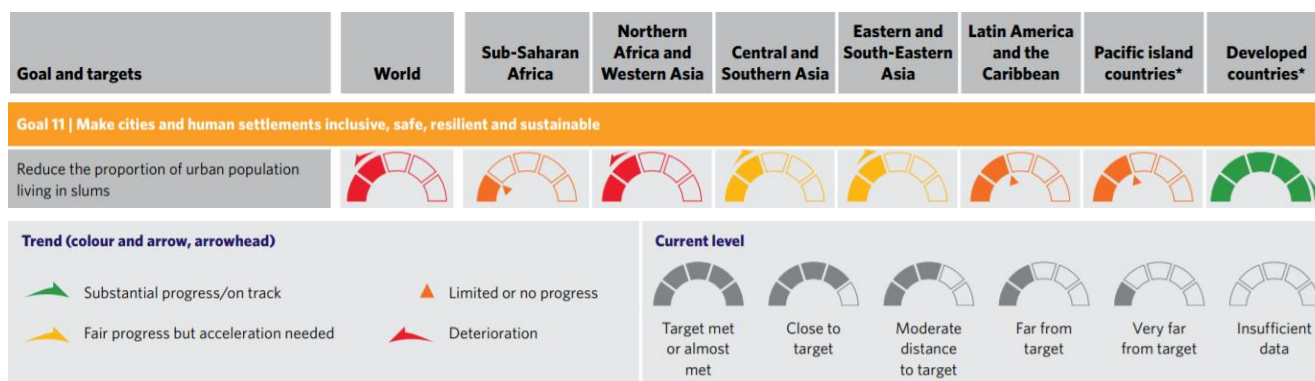


Figure 1: Progress chart of Target 11.1

(Source: UN (2020) Sustainable Development Goals Progress Chart <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/progress-chart-2020.pdf>)

“The progress chart presents two types of information: 1) a trend assessment using stoplight colours and 2) a level of development assessment based on the latest available data using a gauge meter. The chart is based on a limited number of indicators and on information available as of May 2020. A baseline year of around 2015 is used for the trend assessment for most indicators. If no sufficient empirical data are available around that time, a baseline year of around 2010 is used. The latest available data for most indicators are from 2018 to 2019; for a few indicators, the data go back to 2015 and 2016.”⁹

*Pacific island countries: Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand

*Developed countries: Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand

2.1. Indicator 11.1.1: Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing

Here we present some historical background and information on the two components of Indicator 11.1.1, along with their measurement.

Indicator 11.1.1 is a continuation of Indicator 7.10 from the Millennium Development Goals: “Proportion of urban population living in slums”, aimed to measure Goal 1: Ensure environmental sustainability, and Target 7D: “By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.”¹⁰ In order to follow the more comprehensive manner in which the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development addresses housing-related issues, reflected by Goal 11, Target 11.1, the indicator was developed to include informal settlements and other forms of inadequate housing.

⁹ U.N. “Sustainable Development Goals Progress Chart 2020” <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/progress-chart-2020.pdf>, p. 2.

¹⁰ <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=Indicators/OfficialList.htm>

Indicator 11.1.1 has two components: proportion of urban population living in slums and informal settlements, and proportion of urban population living in other forms of inadequate housing. This approach develops a more comprehensive view of housing poverty, but it is important to note that these components are overlapping. At a later stage, the development of a composite index has been envisaged that would combine the two components to provide one estimate,¹¹ but so far no such index is available.

The two components of the indicator are measured as follows:

- (1) *Proportion of urban population living in slums and informal settlements.*

Upon recommendation of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators, or IAEG-SDG, the indicator for urban population living in slums and informal settlements was merged, as the criteria of informal settlements are captured in the definition of slums, as shown in Table 1. According to UN-HABITAT, “A slum household is a group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area who lack one or more of the following:

- Durable housing of a permanent nature that protects against extreme climate conditions.
- Sufficient living space, which means not more than three people sharing the same room.
- Easy access to safe water in sufficient amounts at an affordable price.
- Access to adequate sanitation in the form of a private or public toilet shared by a reasonable number of people.
- Security of tenure that prevents forced evictions.”¹²

“Slum population” is defined as people living in slum households.

As shown in Table 1, out of the seven criteria set by the U.N. for adequate housing, the definition of urban slum population refers to four: availability of services, materials, facilities, and infrastructure; habitability; location; and legal security of tenure.¹³

U.N. criteria for adequate housing	Potential operational criteria for adequate housing	Slums	Informal settlements	Inadequate housing
Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure	Access to water	X	X	X
	Access to sanitation	X	X	X
Habitability	Sufficient living area	X		X
Habitability Location	Structural quality, durability and location	X	X	X

¹¹ U.N. *Tracking Progress Towards Inclusive, Safe, and Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements – SDG 11 Synthesis Report* – High-Level Political Forum 2018. <https://unhabitat.org/sdg-11-synthesis-report-0>

¹² UN-HABITAT. “The Urban SDGs Monitoring Series,” (2019). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/06/the_urban_sdg_monitoring_series_monitoring_sdg_indicator_11.1.pdf p. 2.)

¹³ The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights’ General Comments No.4 (1991) on the Right to Adequate Housing and No.7 (1997) on Forced Evictions.

Legal security of tenure	Security of tenure	X	X	X
Affordability	Affordability			X
Accessibility	Accessibility			X
Cultural adequacy	Cultural adequacy			X

Table 1: Criteria defining slums, informal settlements and inadequate housing

(Source: SDG Indicators, Metadata repository <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/?Text=&Goal=11&Target=11.1>)

It is important to note that the indicator is deprivation-based (i.e., identifying people in households with specific housing deprivations), and not area-based (i.e., it does not use a spatial identification of “slum areas”).

(2) *Urban population living in inadequate housing*

As shown above, the definition of urban slum population uses four criteria of housing adequacy set by the U.N. The second component of Indicator 11.1.1 intends to grasp further aspects of housing inadequacy. As shown in Table 1, out of the seven criteria of adequate housing,¹⁴ the three that are not covered by the definition of slum population are affordability, accessibility and cultural adequacy. Upon recommendation from the IAEG-SDG, housing affordability was selected from these criteria, as it “is not only a key housing adequacy criterion, but is a suitable means of measuring inadequate housing in a more encompassing manner, as it remains a global challenge across different countries and income levels.”¹⁵

Housing affordability can be measured either through the affordability of accessing housing or through the affordability of the running costs of housing. The affordability of accessing housing can be assessed by comparing average/median house prices and rents to monthly incomes (price-to-income ratio and rent-to-income ratio). UN-HABITAT considers access to housing unaffordable if it costs more than three times the average annual income to buy a home. The affordability of the running costs of housing can be measured by comparing housing-related expenditures of households to their incomes. For SDG Target 11.1, affordability of the housing sector is being monitored on the basis of running costs. Based on the definition of World Bank and UN-HABITAT, housing is considered unaffordable if housing costs (including mortgage or rent payment, and direct operational expenses such as service payments, insurance and taxes) exceed 30% of the total monthly income of the household).¹⁶

Because of the **lack of updated global data concerning housing affordability, several reports identified in the review of literature focus only on the first component of the indicator** — *Proportion of urban population living in slums and informal settlements* — and present data on urban

¹⁴ The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' General Comments No. 4 (1991) on the Right to Adequate Housing and No. 7 (1997) on Forced Evictions.

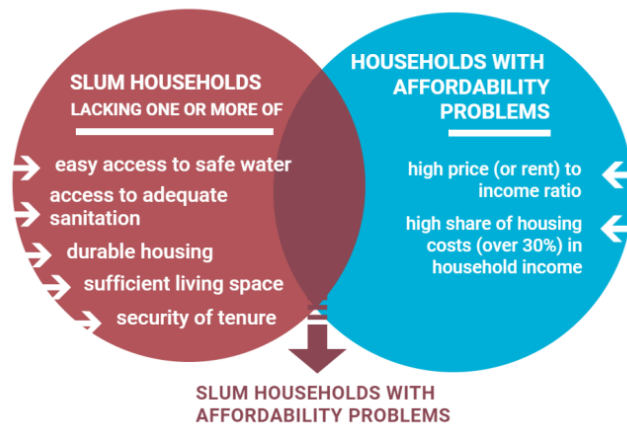
¹⁵ SDG Indicators, Metadata repository <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/?Text=&Goal=11&Target=11.1>

¹⁶ UN-HABITAT. „The Global Housing Affordability Challenge,” *Urban Data Digest*, Version 2, (2019). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/06/urban_data_digest_the_global_housing_affordability_challenge.pdf, p. 6.

slum populations. However, leaving out people with housing affordability problems who do not qualify as slum dwellers **underestimates the goal's target population**. This report presents available information on both components.

SDG 11 : Target 11.1 : Indicator 11.1.1
 Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing

Figure 2: Components of Indicator 11.1 (Source: Infographic by Nóra Feldmár)



In the following subchapters, we present data according to the two components of Indicator 11.1.1.

2.1.1. Component 1: Urban population living in slums

As of 2018, the global population living in slums exceeded 1 billion,¹⁷ 300 million of whom are children.¹⁸ Over two-thirds of all slum dwellers live in Asia, with the biggest number in East and Southeast Asia (approximately 370 million people, with a large share in China), and Central and South Asia (220 million-230 million people, with a large share in India). **The slum population in Sub-Saharan Africa is also significant** (238 million people).¹⁹

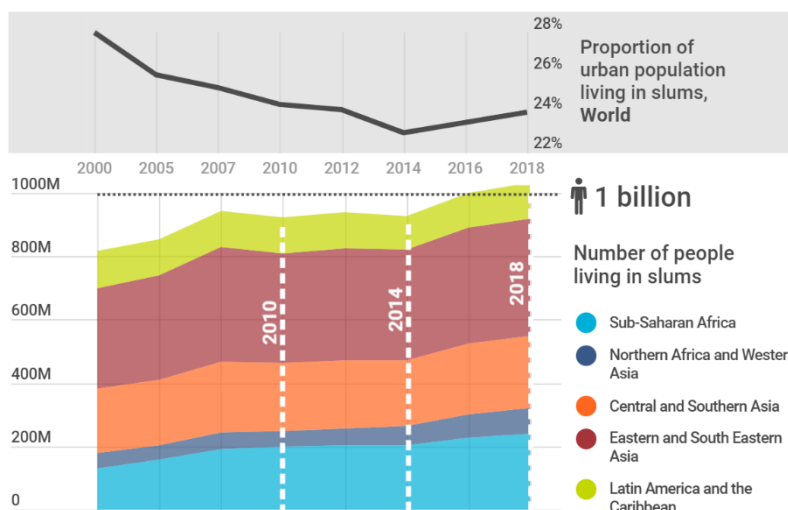


Figure 3: Urban population living in slums

¹⁷ U.N. "Tracking Progress Towards Inclusive, Safe, and Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements – SDG 11 Synthesis Report" High-Level Political Forum 2018, p. 40. (2018).

¹⁸ UN-HABITAT. "World Cities Report 2020," (2020).

https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/10/wcr_2020_report.pdf p. 67.

¹⁹ UNDESA. (n.d.). SDG11. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/goal-11/>

(Figure 3 Source: UN-HABITAT. World Cities Report 2020, p. 318. (2020) <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/> Table B.3: Regional Slum Estimates 1990-2018, referring to UN-HABITAT Global Housing Indicators Database 2020. Infographic by Nora Feldmár)

The proportion of slum dwellers is the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa, with more than half of the urban population (56.5%) living in slum and/or informal housing conditions. In Central and South Asia, the proportion of slum dwellers in the urban population was nearly one-third of the population (31.2%). In East and Southeast Asia, North Africa and Western Asia, and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), about 1 in 4 urban residents live in a slum household. In Latin America and the Caribbean, this proportion was one-fifth (20.9%).²⁰

Global and regional trends in urban slum population 2000-2014

According to UN-HABITAT, **the proportion of urban slum population decreased from 28% to 23% between 2000 and 2014. Meanwhile, the absolute number of slum dwellers continued to increase, from 817 million people to 928 million.** However, global trends hide significant regional differences.

Although all regions experienced a proportional decrease of urban slum population between 2000 and 2014, the scale of change differed, with the largest proportional decrease in Central and South Asia, East and Southeast Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.²¹ During this time, we saw that in most regions, regardless of countries' efforts, the absolute number of populations living in slums was increasing, as was the case in Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Western Asia. A decrease in not only the proportional but also the absolute numbers of slum dwellers was observed between 2000 and 2014 in South Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North Africa.²²

In Sub-Saharan Africa, slum upgrading efforts were slower than the rapid urbanisation being experienced across the region and have contributed to further increasing the already high number of slum households. In Western Asia, ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Yemen inhibited progress in reducing slum populations. In North Africa, effective government policies decreased the number of slum residents by 2014, remarkably in Egypt by more than one-third and in Morocco by more than half.²³

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the declining number of people living in slum dwellings between 2000 and 2014 hides significant intraregional disparities. Despite local neighbourhood improvement programmes for slum upgrading, with notable results in countries such as Argentina, most slums are still underserved and face higher levels of crime and corruption.²⁴

²⁰ UN-HABITAT. "World Cities Report 2020," (2020). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/10/wcr_2020_report.pdf

²¹ UN-HABITAT. "World Cities Report 2020," (2020). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/10/wcr_2020_report.pdf

²² U.N. "Tracking Progress Towards Inclusive, Safe, and Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements – SDG 11 Synthesis Report" High-Level Political Forum 2018. <https://unhabitat.org/sdg-11-synthesis-report-0> p. 41.

²³ UN DESA. *World Social Report 2020*, "Chapter 4: Urbanization: Expanding Opportunities but Deeper Divides." (2020a). <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/02/World-Social-Report-2020-Chapter-4.pdf> p. 120.

²⁴ *ibid.* p. 121. *Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements – SDG 11 Synthesis Report – High-Level Political Forum 2018.* <https://unhabitat.org/sdg-11-synthesis-report-0> p. 41. Citing data from UN-HABITAT, 2018.

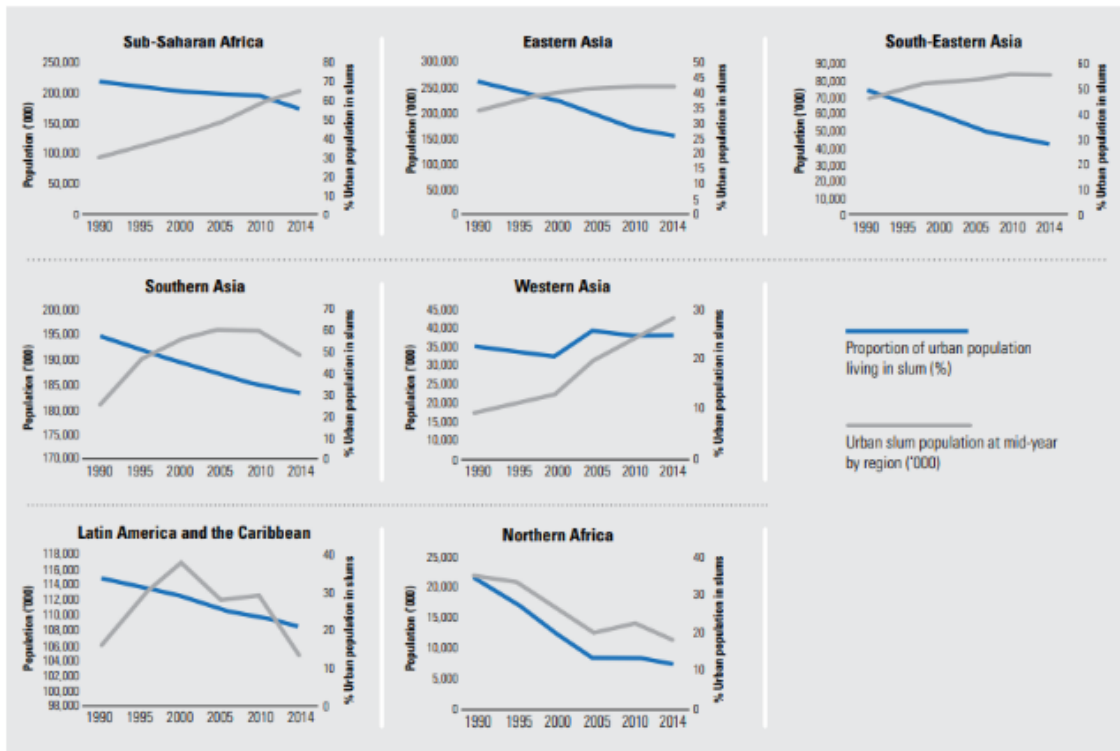


Figure 4: Changes in slum population by region 1990-2014

(Source: U.N. "Tracking Progress Towards Inclusive, Safe, and Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements — SDG 11 Synthesis Report." 2018.)

Global and regional trends in urban slum population 2014-2018

The years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015 were characterized by an increase of the proportion of slum dwellers, reversing the positive trend of the previous years. Globally, nearly 1 out of every 4 urban residents — 24 % of the urban population — live in slumlike housing conditions. The absolute number of slum dwellers further increased, from 928 million people to 1.03 billion.

Last year's increase in the global proportion of slum dwellers can be attributed to a trend change in North Africa and Western Asia and, to a lesser extent, in Sub-Saharan Africa.²⁵ In other regions, the proportion of slum dwellers continued to decrease, albeit at a much smaller scale than earlier.²⁶

²⁵ U.N. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020*. (2020). <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2020.pdf>

²⁶ U.N. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020*. (2020). <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2020.pdf>

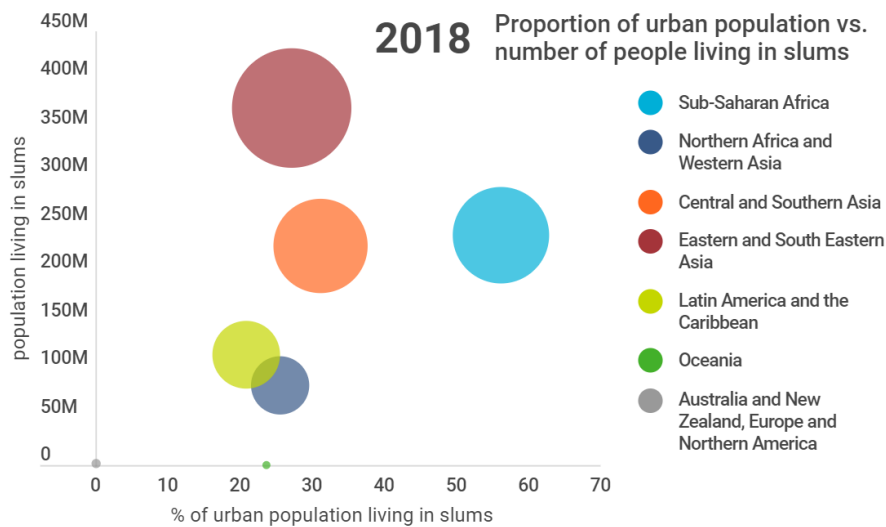


Figure 5: Trends in the proportion and number of urban slum population 2000-2018

(Source: UN-HABITAT. *World Cities Report 2020*, p. 318. (2020). <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/> Table B.3: Regional Slum Estimates 1990-2018, referring to UN-HABITAT Global Housing Indicators Database 2020.)

Infographic by Nora Feldmár)

2.1.2. Component 2: Inadequate housing

The second component of Indicator 11.1, to measure further aspects of inadequate housing not covered by the definition of slums and informal settlements, is housing affordability. For now, there is a **lack of updated global data regarding the population facing housing unaffordability**. However, based on data from the mid-2010s, UN-HABITAT has already warned of a global affordability crisis.²⁷

Affordability of housing

According to UN-HABITAT, housing is considered unaffordable if a median-priced dwelling costs more than three years of median annual income.²⁸ Meanwhile, based on data from the mid-2010s, UN-HABITAT estimated that globally, it took more than twice as much — 6.1 years of median income — to purchase a median-priced dwelling. In low-income countries, the average price to purchase a home was as high as nearly eight years of average household income. Access to housing was most unaffordable in East Asia and the Pacific (6.1 years of annual household income), followed by Southeast Asia (5.7 years of annual household income). Housing was reportedly more affordable in Sub-Saharan Africa (four years of annual household income) and Western Asia and North Africa (4.2 years of annual household income) but still considered unaffordable under the UN-HABITAT standard.

²⁷ UN-HABITAT. “The Global Housing Affordability Challenge,” *Urban Data Digest*, Version 2. (2019). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/06/urban_data_digest_the_global_housing_affordability_challenge.pdf, p. 6.

²⁸ UN-HABITAT. “The Global Housing Affordability Challenge,” *Urban Data Digest*, Version 2. (2019). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/06/urban_data_digest_the_global_housing_affordability_challenge.pdf

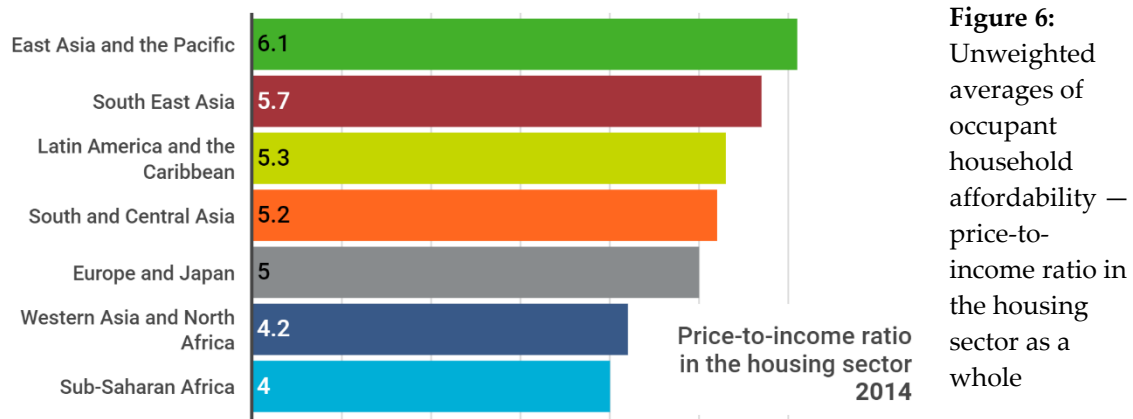


Figure 6: Unweighted averages of occupant household affordability — price-to-income ratio in the housing sector as a whole

(Source: UN-HABITAT. “The Global Housing Affordability Challenge,” *Urban Data Digest*, Version 2. (2019). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/06/urban_data_digest_the_global_housing_affordability_challenge.pdf p. 3, referring to the Global Urban Indicators database: Analysis from Global Sample of Cities, 2015.)

Affordability of running costs of housing

On the basis of running costs of housing — i.e., the monthly costs related to housing, including mortgage or rent and utility fees — housing is considered unaffordable if monthly housing costs exceed 30% of the household’s monthly income. According to UN-HABITAT data regarding affordability of the running costs of housing, **in Sub-Saharan Africa, more than half of urban households had no access to affordable housing in 2014 (55.4%)**, followed by Western Asia, North Africa, Central Asia and South Asia, where nearly one-third of the households faced affordability problems (30%, 5.5% and 30.3%, respectively). In Latin America and the Caribbean and in East and Southeast Asia, approximately 1 in 5 urban households had no access to affordable housing (21.4% and 19.8%, respectively). Meanwhile, according to self-reporting, 41% of people surveyed in Latin America and the Caribbean could not find affordable housing in their city.²⁹ In North America and Europe, 12.8% of urban households were affected by housing unaffordability, while in Australia and New Zealand only 6% reported the same.³⁰

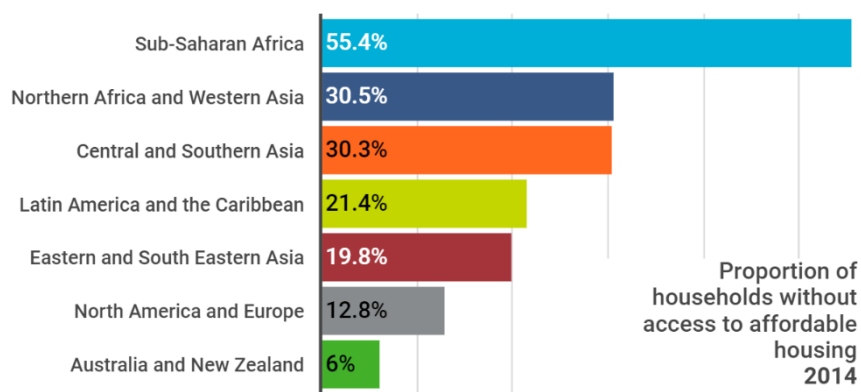


Figure 7: Proportion of households without access to affordable housing

²⁹ World Bank. *Housing in Latin America and the Caribbean – Challenges and Opportunities*, (2017). <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/812411495574427123/Housing-in-LAC.pdf>

³⁰ UN-HABITAT. “The Global Housing Affordability Challenge,” *Urban Data Digest*, Version 2. (2019). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/06/urban_data_digest_the_global_housing_affordability_challenge.pdf

(Source: UN-HABITAT. "The Global Housing Affordability Challenge," *Urban Data Digest, Version 2.* (2019). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/06/urban_data_digest_the_global_housing_affordability_challenge.pdf p. 5., referring to the *Urban Expansion Programme*, New York University, Lincoln Institute and UN-HABITAT, 2016. Infographic by Nóra Feldmár.)

Housing affordability, both in terms of accessing housing and the running costs of housing, shows high variations among countries. UN-HABITAT analysis on housing affordability cites Africa for example, where unaffordability rates based on the running costs of housing (relation of monthly housing costs to monthly household incomes) range from 1.5% in Mauritius to 100% in Sierra Leone.³¹

In major cities, high and increasing property and rent prices contribute to decreasing housing affordability. A recent analysis from the Asian Development Bank based on housing price data for 211 cities in 27 Asian developing countries found price-to-income ratios as high as 15.8, warning that lack of access to formal finance greatly aggravates affordability problems.³²

Slums are mostly concentrated in developing countries, but housing unaffordability affects households in developed countries as well. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, and the statistical office of the European Union, Eurostat, use a 40% cutoff point for measuring housing unaffordability. In 16 OECD countries, over 40% of low-income owners with a mortgage face housing unaffordability, and in 14 countries, a similar proportion of renters live in unaffordable housing.³³ According to Eurostat data, approximately 10% of the population of the European Union lived in unaffordable housing in 2019, the highest proportion in Greece (36%) and the lowest in Cyprus (2.3%). Among the population below the poverty line, about 37.1% faced housing unaffordability in 2019 (88.2% in Greece). Data also show an outstanding vulnerability of market renters, with 26.2% living in unaffordable housing (83.2% in Greece).³⁴

2.2. National and local perspectives on slums and informal settlements and inadequate housing

Below we present national and local perspectives, focusing on areas where progress or regression concerning Indicator 11.1.1 was most pronounced.

According to UN-HABITAT's analysis of voluntary national reviews, or VNRs, submitted in 2018, when SDG 11 was under review, **90% of countries reported challenges concerning housing and the need to establish social housing.**³⁵ Furthermore, challenges of slum growth were reported in the 2020 VNRs of Bangladesh, Comoros, Liberia, Libya and Malawi. Various factors were identified by countries driving this trend, such as insufficient levels of local economic

³¹ UN-HABITAT. "The Global Housing Affordability Challenge," *Urban Data Digest, Version 2.* (2019). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/06/urban_data_digest_the_global_housing_affordability_challenge.pdf p. 5.

³² Helble, Matthias. "The Housing Unaffordability Crisis in Asia." (2019). <https://blogs.adb.org/blog/housing-unaffordability-crisis-asia>

³³ UN-HABITAT. *World Cities Report 2020.* (2020). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/10/wcr_2020_report.pdf

³⁴ Eurostat. "Housing Cost Overburden Rate by Age, Sex and Poverty Status," EU-SILC survey" (ilc_lvho07a) (2021). https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_lvho07a/default/table?lang=en

³⁵ UN-HABITAT. *World Cities Report 2020.* (2020). p. 318. <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/p.5>

development and weak institutional and regulatory frameworks for sustainable urban development. Actions were reported from governments of Benin, Zambia (formulation of a National Urbanisation Policy), Liberia (piloting sustainable cities, with urban renewal actions focusing on housing), and India (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, or PMAY, programme targeting urban households and slum development).³⁶ It is also important to note that slums also exist in smaller cities.³⁷ UN-HABITAT cites Angola, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia as having significant slum populations in smaller cities.³⁸

Among the countries with the highest proportional increase of urban slum dwellers between 2014 and 2018 were countries severely hit by political unrest and economic crises, such as Syria (18.6% increase), Jordan (10.5% increase), Yemen (5.4% increase) and Lebanon (5% increase) from Western Asia; Myanmar from Southeast Asia (15,1% increase); Colombia, Venezuela, Honduras (10-15% increase) and Bolivia and Mexico (approximately 5% increase) from Latin America and the Caribbean; Afghanistan from Central and South Asia (8% increase); Guinea from Sub-Saharan Africa (6.8% increase). Worryingly, countries with the largest urban slum populations, including India and Indonesia, reported significant proportional increase of slum dwellers (11.2% and 8.8%, respectively).

Countries with the highest proportional decrease in slum dwellers (15-19%) include Trinidad and Tobago, Ecuador, Sierra Leone, and Madagascar. Countries with 10-15% decrease include Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Niger, Rwanda, Tanzania and Burundi. Kenya and Ethiopia also reported a nearly 10% decrease in the proportion of slum dwellers.

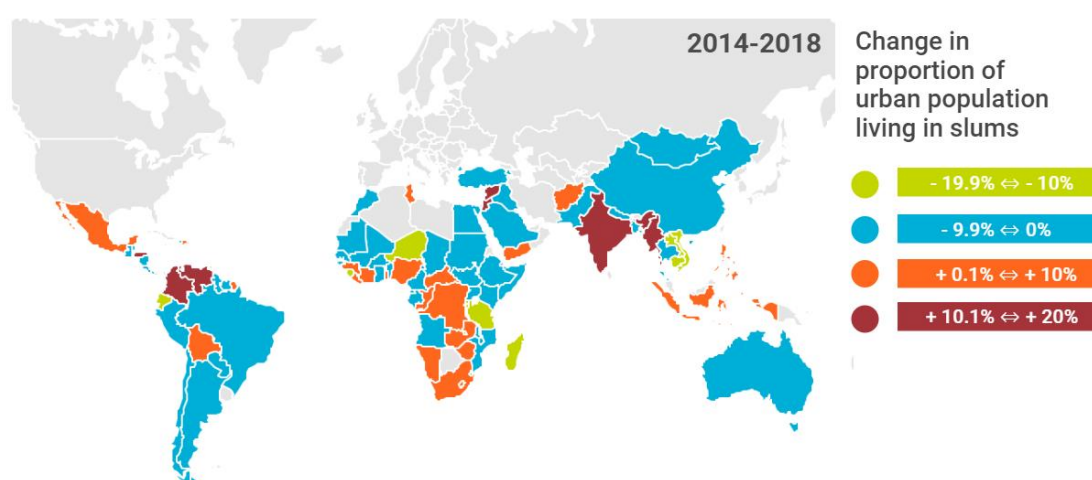


Figure 8: Change in the proportion of urban population living in slums

(Source: UN-HABITAT. "Proportion of Urban Population Living in Slums," *Urban Indicators Database*, (%) EN_LND_SLUM, (2020) <https://data.unhabitat.org/datasets/proportion-of-urban-population-living-in-slums-time-period-between-1990-and-2018/data>)

³⁶ UN DESA. *Voluntary National Reviews Synthesis Report*. (2020).

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/27027VNR_Synthesis_Report_2020.pdf, p. 63.

³⁷ UN DESA. *World Social Report 2020*, Chapter 4. (2020a) <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/02/World-Social-Report-2020-Chapter-4.pdf>, p. 120.

³⁸ Ibid.

The specific reasons for the increase in slum dwellers vary by country. The ongoing conflict in **Syria** significantly damaged the housing sector³⁹ through the destruction of houses, investments, land and property rights.⁴⁰ In **Venezuela**, the annual inflation rate reached 180,000% at the end of 2018, impoverishing 82% of the population, creating an inability to afford existing housing, and causing many households to move to informal and/or inadequate settlements.⁴¹ In **Indonesia**, despite an improvement in the proportion of households with access to adequate housing (from 34.2% in 2015 to 38.3% in 2018), the number of people living in slums increased. In the 2019 VNR, the government listed inadequate infrastructure and basic services, inability to provide land and housing finance for low-income groups, and inadequate connectivity of cities as main challenges.⁴² In **Papua New Guinea**, over 80% of the country's population are vulnerable to climate-change-related disasters, and institutions have limited capacities for strategic planning and management of the urban environment.⁴³

Alternatively, several countries have reported progress toward reducing the proportion of urban slum population. The government of **Trinidad and Tobago** and Habitat for Humanity have collaborated to improve the standard of living for low-income residents by providing grants and low- or no- interest loans for infrastructural repairs to homes in need of sanitation, plumbing and electrical work.⁴⁴ Between 2014 and 2018, the country nearly eliminated slum housing (from 24.7% to 1.9% of urban residents), decreasing the number of slum dwellers from 179,000 to 14,000.⁴⁵ In **Armenia**, the government has provided housing certificates to residents, including refugees and orphanage graduates.⁴⁶ In **Vietnam**, the national floor area per person increased from 16.7 square meters in 2009 to 23.4 square meters in 2017, and housing support was provided to more than 570,000 households in rural areas.⁴⁷ **Guangzhou** (China) used microrenovation to improve housing conditions in shantytowns. In 2016-20, 1.5 million residents benefited from such renovations.⁴⁸ The *World Cities Report* cites Brazil, Cuba, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Tunisia as countries that contained and reduced slum growth because of political commitments to address inequality by investing in housing for the most vulnerable population, among other measures.⁴⁹

³⁹ World Bank. *Syria Damage Assessment*. (2017).

<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/530541512657033401/pdf/121943-WP-P161647-PUBLIC-Syria-Damage-Assessment.pdf>

⁴⁰ EASO. Country Guidance: Syria. <https://easo.europa.eu/country-guidance-syria/551-general-situation>

⁴¹ <https://borgenproject.org/10-facts-about-slums-in-venezuela/>

⁴² VNR Indonesia. (2019).

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23803INDONESIA_Final_Cetak_VNR_2019_Indonesia_Rev2.pdf

⁴³ VNR Papua New Guinea. (2020).

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26453VNR_2020_Papua_New_Guinea_Report.pdf

⁴⁴ VNR Trinidad and Tobago. (2020).

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26730VNR_2020_Trinidad_Report.pdf

⁴⁵ UN-HABITAT. *World Cities Report 2020*. (2020).

https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/10/wcr_2020_report.pdf Table B.4. p. 321.

⁴⁶ VNR Armenia. (2020).

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26318Armenia_VNRFINAL.pdf

⁴⁷ VNR Viet Nam. (2018). https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19967VNR_of_Viet_Nam.pdf

⁴⁸ VLR Guangzhou. (2020). <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/VLR%20Guangzhou%2C%20China-compressed.pdf>

⁴⁹ UN-HABITAT. *World Cities Report 2020*. (2020).

https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/10/wcr_2020_report.pdf

3. Critical issues concerning progress on Target 11.1

This chapter includes a short overview on the factors contributing to the continued growth of urban slums, informal settlements and other forms of inadequate housing, and also considers critical issues inhibiting progress on Target 11.1.

The continued growth of urban slums, informal settlements and other forms of inadequate housing is a problem that has persisted for decades, mainly as a consequence of rapid urbanisation; internal growth of slums due to natural population increases (more births than deaths) and changes in household structures; systemic inequalities leading to low income, inequalities and discrimination; commodification of housing; climate change impact; political unrest; ineffective urban planning and local governance; lack of appropriate land and housing policies; and lack of housing finance instruments available for low-income households. The housing ecosystem is complex and encompasses the many stakeholders, processes, structures and conditions that intersect and influence the availability of, and ability to live in, adequate and affordable housing. There is no single solution to creating a safe and decent place to live.

Critical issues hindering the progress of Target 11.1 are outlined in the following subsections.

Housing is not being prioritized

Despite general acknowledgment of the importance of cities in sustainable development, the **commitment made by member states and other key implementing bodies** for the implementation of Target 11.1 has been **insufficient for reversing the global housing crisis**. Domestic and international investments are made towards the progress on SDG themes such as: “*infrastructure, climate change mitigation, food and agriculture, health, telecommunications, and ecosystems and biodiversity*,”⁵⁰ but housing is not prioritized nor mainstreamed into investments in developing countries.

Infrastructure is important for the SDGs,⁵¹ **but investing in infrastructure is often conflated for sufficiently investing in SDG11, thus neglecting the essential needs for housing**. The UN-HABITAT report *Financing Sustainable Urbanization: Counting the Costs and Closing the Gap*, which estimates the average annual cost for achieving SDG 11 in small, medium and large cities, notes that the biggest investments are needed in both “housing-public funding” and “transportation.”⁵² **This indicates the considerable weight that Target 11.1 has for achieving SDG 11, and emphasises the importance of housing prioritization in relation to the other sectors.**

Lack of recognition of the complexity of the housing ecosystem

One of the key reasons for the continued development of slum areas is the **inequity throughout the housing ecosystem in the ability to achieve adequate and affordable housing for all**. From policies that result in marginalization, to community norms that create exclusion, to households with limited decision-making power because of social constructs or poverty, various elements

⁵⁰ U.N. *World Investment Report*. (2020). <https://worldinvestmentreport.unctad.org/world-investment-report-2020/ch5-investing-in-the-sdgs/>

⁵¹ <https://unops.economist.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ThecriticalroleofinfrastructurefortheSustainableDevelopmentGoals.pdf>

⁵² UN-HABITAT. *Financing Sustainable Urbanization: Counting the Costs and Closing the Gap*, (2020). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/02/financing_sustainable_urbanization_-_counting_the_costs_and_closing_the_gap_february_2020.pdf

contribute to the inability to overcome the global housing deficit. The SDGs recognize the complexity of development needs in an integrated way, but there is still room for improvement in recognizing how cities and their components, including housing, can be catalysts for advancement if inequities are identified and addressed holistically.

Cities continue to expand without a holistic understanding of the needs of their residents. For example, urban planning practices are outdated and have frequently been inherited by colonizing governments. The existing conceptual and legal framework of urban planning, which evolved in developed countries in the 20th century, is an inappropriate guide to addressing rapid urbanisation in the developing world. Moreover, the resource constraints of administrative bodies, usually local governments, to effectively engage in urban planning and management further hinder the development of cities for all. These concerns are highlighted, with special regard to Africa, in the 2020 *World Cities Report*.⁵³

Housing, when not developed with the needs of the people who will inhabit these homes at the centre of decision-making, results in the further proliferation of slums and informal settlements, and the increasing trend of vacant housing seen across different regions. Although construction is often a driver of economic well-being, livelihoods and opportunity, housing that is not well situated near employment opportunities, is poorly constructed, or is far from social support systems such as schools or medical facilities will result in negative outcomes for residents. As noted in the U.N.'s 2018 synthesis report for Goal 11: "Some countries have managed to provide affordable housing at scale, yet often by repeating mass housing schemes, built on cheap and peripheral land, where people have limited access to services, jobs and opportunities."⁵⁴ Construction may also benefit the economy by creating jobs and investment, but it is important to focus on solving the social need.

Lack of meaningful cooperation and coordination among key stakeholders

Lack of recognition of the multiactor nature of the housing ecosystem and lack of cooperation and coordination among key stakeholders hinder the development and implementation of relevant, effective and sustainable housing interventions.

The scale of the problem of slums, informal settlements and other forms of inadequate housing, and its wider structural causes (including low incomes and lack of effective urban planning, land use, housing policies, etc.) makes the involvement of national-level entities vital. According to UN-HABITAT, "65 percent of the SDG agenda may not be fully achieved without the involvement of urban and local actors."⁵⁵ Moreover, in order to realise SDG 11 and its targets, coordination also needs to be sought with other actors, including the private sector, research institutions and academia, and the international community.

Contextual knowledge and mandates make the participation of local government indispensable. But local governments may suffer from ineffective governance, lack of political will, limited political power or mandate, limited expertise and administrative resources, limited budgets, poor

⁵³ UN-HABITAT. *World Cities Report 2020*, (2020). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/10/wcr_2020_report.pdf, p. 222.

⁵⁴ U.N. *Tracking Progress Towards Inclusive, Safe, and Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements – SDG 11 Synthesis Report*, High Level Political Forum 2018. (2018). <https://unhabitat.org/sdg-11-synthesis-report> p. 6.

⁵⁵ U.N. Sustainable Development Solution Network. *Getting Started with the SDGs in Cities: A Guide for Stakeholders*. (2016). <https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/6f2c9f57/files/uploaded/Cities-SDG-Guide.pdf>

coordination and communication among departments, lack of awareness for sustainability challenges, and poor communication with public and other actors, e.g., civil society.⁵⁶

Participatory approaches are essential. Without the engagement of the local community, the chances for sustainable project results are weak. If these approaches are not used in a careful manner, however, they can lead to increasing inequalities within the community. For example, if privileged members of the community have better chances for participation while no measures are taken to include the most vulnerable, clientele networks or political manipulation may be strengthened.⁵⁷ Also, if programmes remain ad hoc, without institutionalisation, the potential for participatory planning is limited.

Underreporting of Target 11.1

The lack of housing as a priority can be also viewed as a reason for the underreporting of Target 11.1.

Until 2020, 168 U.N. member states⁵⁸ had conducted VNRs to measure progress at the national and subnational levels as part of the 2030 Agenda follow-up and review mechanisms. In addition, some local governments around the world are beginning to conduct voluntary local reviews, or VLRs. However, reporting is voluntary and based on the countries' and cities' priorities, conditions and data availability. Although most of the countries have said sustainable urban development is important, they do not treat all indicators with equal importance.

Underreporting of Target 11.1 is notable in the VNRs and VLRs available in the U.N. SDGs online knowledge development platform. Some countries use a narrative style for reporting without specifying the corresponding targets. Notably, **VLRs show a bigger engagement with Target 11.1**, emphasizing the importance of the target at the local level, **but the number of VLRs conducted to date has been limited because many cities lack resources to develop a review process that is not compulsory.**

Within the VNRs and VLRs, **information about housing is sometimes reported under other SDGs**. For example, in the 2020 VNR of Trinidad and Tobago,⁵⁹ housing was mentioned in Goal 10, under "improve access to social protection," and no reference was made to the issue under Goal 11 or Target 11.1, despite the country's achievements in the reduction of the proportion and number of urban slum population. The indivisibility character of the 2030 Agenda requires that countries report progress equally for all the SDGs.⁶⁰

The use of different indicators (existing city or country indicators) other than Indicator 11.1.1 under Target 11.1 makes it difficult to compare or provide a realistic view of the achievements of

⁵⁶ Global Platform for Sustainable Cities. *Sustainable Urban Development Assessment (SUDA) – Summary Report*. (2020). <https://www.thegpsc.org/knowledge-products/integrated-urban-planning/sustainable-urban-development-assessment-suda-summary>

⁵⁷ UN-HABITAT. *World Cities Report 2020*. (2020). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/10/wcr_2020_report.pdf; [Spotlight Innenteil 2019_web_sdq11.pdf \(2030spotlight.org\)](https://www.unhabitat.org/spotlight/2030spotlight.org)

⁵⁸ UN-HLPF. (2020), https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/27027VNR_Synthesis_Report_2020.pdf

⁵⁹ VNR Trinidad and Tobago (2020). https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26730VNR_2020_Trinidad_Report.pdf

⁶⁰ UNDESA. *Voluntary National Reviews Reports – What Do They (Not) Tell Us?* (2019). <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/CDP-bp-2019-49.pdf>

this target. For example, in Toyama, Japan's 2018 VLR,⁶¹ Target 11.1 is measured through "Toyama indicator: proportion of aseismic housing."

Limitations of data

As of yet, there is a **lack of updated global data for housing affordability**. In the monitoring framework of the SDGs, monitoring of affordability is intended to grasp further aspects of housing inadequacy not covered by the definition of urban slum population (as a second component of Indicator 11.1.1, as discussed above). As such, it also provides an opportunity to reveal housing inadequacy problems in countries where slums are not prevalent. Therefore, lack of such data contributes to the **inadequate tracking of progress on Target 11.1 and underestimation of the target group of interventions**. The lack of available data also drives away attention and resources for addressing housing affordability problems. The U.N.'s synthesis report for SDG 11 from 2018 also noted challenges in data collection concerning this component of the indicator.⁶²

Moreover, Indicator 11.1.1 does not capture all the elements of Target 11.1. Therefore, many countries have extended its measurement with supplementary indicators, but it is not clear how those feed into the SDG monitoring framework. For example, the Australian monitoring system considers three supplementary indicators for Target 11.1., including one concerning homeless people (clients of specialist homelessness services per 10,000 population) not initially covered by Indicator 11.1.1.⁶³

The impossibility of capturing homelessness through Indicator 11.1.1 has been identified as a limitation of the indicator from the very beginning. At the same time, when indicators on homelessness are considered, the lack of an internationally agreed upon definition of homelessness prevents the possibility of accurately comparing findings from different countries and aggregating data.⁶⁴

Additionally, the way in which "habitability" is defined within the definition of "slum" does not fully cover the concept of habitability within the scope of inadequate housing. Indicator 11.1.1 currently accounts only for the lack of affordability, accessibility and cultural adequacy as a slum's main "deprivations." "Habitability" is also only partially covered. Based on the definition provided by the U.N. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, or CESCR, habitability includes "protection from cold, damp, heat, rain, wind or other threats to health, structural hazards, and disease vectors" in addition to available space.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, the definition of slums focuses only on available space (overcrowding).

⁶¹ VLR Toyama, (2018). <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/english-vlr-toyama-city-japan-2018.pdf>

⁶² U.N. *Tracking Progress Towards Inclusive, Safe, and Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements – SDG 11 Synthesis Report* High-Level Political Forum 2018, (2018). <https://unhabitat.org/sdg-11-synthesis-report-0>

⁶³ Monash University. *Transforming Australia Report*, (2020). https://www.sdgtransformingaustralia.com/wp-content/uploads/MSDI_TA2020_Summary.pdf

⁶⁴ UN-HABITAT. Expert Group Meeting on Affordable Housing and Social Protection Systems for All to Address Homelessness (Nairobi, 22-24 May 2019): Proceedings. (2020). <https://unhabitat.org/expert-group-meeting-on-affordable-housing-and-social-protection-systems-for-all-to-address>

⁶⁵ U.N. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. General Comment No. 4: The Right to Adequate Housing (Art. 11 (1) of the Covenant), 13 December 1991, E/1992/23, available at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/47a7079a1.html>.

Reporting of Indicator 11.1.1 needs **local, consistent, validated and up-to-date data**, which is **challenging to collect**. UN-HABITAT estimates that “23% of all SDG indicators have a local or urban component,”⁶⁶ with a majority of indicators under Goal 11 requiring data collection at the local level, including Indicator 11.1.1. Meanwhile, there is often lack of communication regarding data or data needs between national governments and local authorities, or other actors which can also fill a data gathering gap (such as academia or the civil society), and the management of data collection at the subnational level is difficult. This contributes to the fact that most countries provide only national-level data, without spatial disaggregation.

A variety of data sets can be used to report on Indicator 11.1.1, such as national population and housing censuses, demographic and health surveys, multiple indicator cluster surveys, living standard measurement surveys, urban inequalities surveys, and household expenditure and income surveys. Meanwhile, **data collected by relevant government departments, civil society, academia, local governments and other stakeholders are not necessarily known of or acknowledged by national statistical offices**. Since countries do not always report updated data in their VNRs — for instance, some reports are affected by the timing of censuses, which are usually conducted every 10 years — available knowledge on progress at a global level is limited.

Lack of progress on other SDGs inhibits progress toward Target 11.1

The SDGs are interconnected,⁶⁷ and goals cannot be implemented alone. **The success or failure of other SDGs can influence the achievement of SDG 11, Target 11.1**. Housing is an integral part of SDGs 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 11. It has a direct impact on SDGs 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 17 and an indirect impact on SDGs 2, 4, 14 and 15.⁶⁸

According to the HLPF 2020, regression is also reported on a target of SDG 13: “Reduce global greenhouse gas emissions,” and limited or no progress has been made on the targets that seek to “achieve full and productive employment for all” (SDG 8) and “reduce inequality within countries” (SDG 10). Meanwhile acceleration is needed for the targets “eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere” (SDG 1) and “achieve universal access to safely managed sanitation services” (SDG 6).⁶⁹ No or low progress on these targets can undermine issues related to housing affordability, housing adequacy and housing resilience.⁷⁰

Furthermore, success on all the targets of SDG 11 can influence the progress on housing, but especially Target 11.3: “By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries”; Target 11.5: “Reduce the adverse effects of natural disasters”; Target 11.a: “Strong national and regional development planning to implement policies for inclusion”; Target 11.b: “Resource efficiency and disaster risk reduction” and 11.c: “Support least-developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials.”⁷¹

⁶⁶ UN-HABITAT. <https://www.local2030.org/library/60/SDG-Goal-11-Monitoring-Framework-A-guide-to-assist-national-and-local-governments-to-monitor-and-report-on-SDG-goal-11-indicators.pdf>

⁶⁷ UNDESA. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report*, (2018). <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2018/interlinkages/>

⁶⁸ Habitat for Humanity International. *Housing and SDGs*, Booklet. (2021).

⁶⁹ U.N. “Sustainable Development Goals Progress Chart,” (2020). <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/progress-chart-2020.pdf>

⁷⁰ Habitat for Humanity International. *Compendium of Best Practices for Housing in Africa*, (2021). https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/compendium_best_cases_Africa.pdf

⁷¹ Habitat for Humanity International. *Housing and SDGs*, Booklet. (2021).

Access to finances for SDGs

To implement the 2030 Agenda, up to US\$4.5 trillion will be needed globally.⁷² The U.N. *Roadmap for Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* cites that “Available finance is not channelled towards sustainable development at the scale and speed required to achieve the SDGs and goals of the Paris Agreement.”⁷³ Furthermore, most of the countries have not elaborated financial strategies and plans for reaching the SDGs.⁷⁴ While business sector involvement is crucial, unsustainable practices can be obstacles for their involvement in SDG-related opportunities, for example in affordable housing.⁷⁵ In general, **there is a lack of information about the finances allocated or needed globally for achieving Target 11.1.** Available financial resources are underexplored, because cities’ costs are usually unknown and there is a lack of awareness about the availability and accessibility of those resources.⁷⁶

4. The future need for adequate housing: Projections for 2030

In the following section, we present available projections concerning urban slum growth by 2030, to mark the magnitude of need for adequate housing in the near future.

The need for adequate housing will increase with continuing urbanization, especially in developing countries. According to calculations by UNDESA’s Population Division,⁷⁷ between 2020 and 2030 the proportion of the world’s urban population is expected to increase from 56.2% to 60.4%, from nearly 4.4 billion people to nearly 5.2 billion. **In 10 years, the number of urban residents is expected to increase by nearly 790 million. Over half of this increase (56%) will take place in Asia (mostly China and India), and an additional approximately 30% will occur in Africa (with a large share in Nigeria).** U.N. projections also show that the world’s 10 fastest growing cities between 2018 and 2035 are expected to be in Africa.⁷⁸ The *World Cities Report 2020* estimates that “a one percent increase in urban population growth will increase the incidence of slums in Africa and Asia by 2.3 percent and 5.3 percent, respectively.”⁷⁹

A 2015 report compiled for the Overseas Development Institute **projects the number of slum dwellers by 2030 at over 1.2 billion**, based on trends between 1990 and 2012, **with the largest slum dweller populations in East Asia, South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America**

⁷² U.N. Sustainable Development Group. *Unlocking SDG Financing: Findings from Early Adopters*, (2018).

<https://unsdg.un.org/resources/unlocking-sdg-financing-findings-early-adopters>.

⁷³ U.N. Secretary General. *Roadmap for Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 2019-2021*, (2019). <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/UN-SG-Roadmap-Financing-the-SDGs-July-2019.pdf>

⁷⁴ UNDESA. (2019). <https://www.un.org/development/desa/statements/asg/mr-harris/2019/09/wef-roadmap-to-sdgs-investment-financing-sdgs-country-roadmaps.html>

⁷⁵ UNDESA. *2020 Financing for Sustainable Development Report*, (2020).

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/publications/2020-financing-for-sustainable-development-report.html>

⁷⁶ UN-HABITAT. *Financing Sustainable Urbanization: Counting the Costs and Closing the Gap*, (2020).

https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/02/financing_sustainable_urbanization_-_counting_the_costs_and_closing_the_gap_february_2020.pdf

⁷⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision, Online Edition*, (2018). <https://population.un.org/wup/Download/>

⁷⁸ Ganz, Grace. „The Housing Crisis in Sub-Saharan African Slums,” (2020). <https://borgenproject.org/sub-saharan-african-slums/>

⁷⁹ UN-HABITAT. *World Cities Report 2020*, (2020).

https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/10/wcr_2020_report.pdf p. 25.

and the Caribbean.⁸⁰ The largest proportional increase in the number of slum dwellers is expected to occur in Sub-Saharan Africa, with a projected 360 million slum dwellers by 2030 (an increase of over 120 million from 2018).

These estimations do not consider the **inevitable impact of the COVID-19 pandemic**. The pandemic has already blocked or reversed much of the progress toward the SDGs.⁸¹ As a consequence of the pandemic, further deterioration of access to affordable and adequate housing is expected, with the main impact related to household financial stress.⁸² The health and economic impacts of the pandemic have placed greater numbers of people around the world in precarious situations, and more and more people are experiencing insecurity in their housing conditions. Approximately 71 million additional people are expected to live in poverty.⁸³ Slum and/or informal urban dwellers are more likely to lose their jobs as they usually work in the informal sector, and evictions within the formal housing sector are also on the rise.⁸⁴ These global challenges highlight the important role of housing for healthy and resilient societies, and the role of urban planning in public health and mitigation of vulnerabilities to other hazards, such as natural disasters. Although the effects of the pandemic for society are still difficult to measure, it is essential that the SDGs should be part of the countries' recovery plans, specifically SDG 11, to ensure a focus on improving slum communities and adequate and affordable housing.

5. Recommendations

This chapter summarizes recommendations concerning housing interventions, and for data collection, reporting and monitoring, on the basis of data and information collected for the report.

Target 11.1 is one of only five targets regressing out of the 169 total targets. Access to adequate and affordable housing is a core component of this target, and this reversal of previous progress reflects the global housing crisis that continues to affect millions around the world. Housing is also a critical element across many of the SDGs, and regression in SDG 11 will impact progress across other sectors that are essential for human development. **Immediate action** is needed to address the regression of Target 11.1.

Adequate and affordable housing has a transformational impact — fostering stability, security and opportunity — on individuals and communities, leading to benefits in health, economic growth, resiliency and livelihoods. Housing improvement is often a ladder out of poverty for families. These changes benefit the larger community, reducing inequality and building resilience

⁸⁰ Nicolai, Susan, et. al. *Projecting Progress – Reaching the SDGs by 2030*, (2015). <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9937.pdf>. Projections on 2000-2012 and 2005-2010 show less increase, but the number of slum dwellers already surpassed such estimations. The projections show less increase than the U.N.'s 2003 calculations, estimating the number of slum dwellers by 2030 to be 2 billion.

⁸¹ UNDESA. *Sustainable Development Goals Report*, (2020). <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/>

⁸² UNHROHC. *COVID-19 and the Right to Housing*, (2020). <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/COVID19andHousingReportSummary.pdf>

⁸³ U.N. *UN Research Roadmap for the COVID-19 Recovery*, <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/communication-resources/un-research-roadmap-covid-19-recovery>

⁸⁴ OECD. *Housing Amid Covid-19: Policy Responses and Challenges*, (2020). <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/housing-amid-covid-19-policy-responses-and-challenges-cfdc08a8/>

against and instigating recovery from economic and natural disasters — and these elements are vital for recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

To achieve progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals, significant action must be taken to reverse the regression and promote progress of Target 11.1 in the following areas during the decade of action, 2020-30:

Position housing at the centre

Housing is central to creating socially just, economically viable, ecologically healthy and sustainable cities. Essentially, we cannot build better cities if we do not address the challenge of slums, informal settlements and other forms of inadequate housing, including unaffordable housing, in a more holistic manner. Therefore, **housing must be at the centre** for building better and more sustainable cities and communities. Addressing housing is vital to ensuring progress on SDG 11 and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- Action for UN-HABITAT: Assist stakeholders in implementing the Housing at the Centre approach, developed as a guide⁸⁵ to implement the New Urban Agenda,⁸⁶ by translating its principles into operative recommendations.
- Actions for national governments: Increase efforts to implement SDG 11.1, including reviewing and improving national legislation to develop context-sensitive and effective urban planning systems, providing mandates for subnational governments for action, improving tenure security, and establishing effective housing allowance systems. Promote a rights-based approach to improving housing that supports the realisation of the right to adequate housing as enshrined in international human rights law, and with the inclusion of vulnerable groups. Build a stronger connection between adequate and sustainable housing.
- Action for local and regional governments: Engage people, communities, and the private and development sectors in creating a common agenda/vision for cities (beyond siloed assessments).
- Action for all stakeholders: When addressing various urban challenges, position housing at the centre and engage people-public-private partnerships when developing interventions.

Recognise the complexity of the housing ecosystem

Cities are centres for innovation, employment, creativity, and social and economic development, and are also complex environments that are constantly changing. Navigating this complexity and addressing the housing challenge in cities requires innovative housing solutions based on assessments of the entire housing ecosystem. **Approaching the affordable housing challenge from a housing ecosystems perspective** provides a deeper understanding of how to address the key constraints and optimize the opportunities that exist within urban contexts.

The housing challenge in cities is dynamic and multifaceted. To develop better solutions requires an understanding of the entire housing ecosystem. This includes understanding the needs and priorities of low-income families, the existing capacity and resources of local governments, the market conditions, and the policy environment. Solutions require **integrated interventions** across

⁸⁵ UN-HABITAT. *Housing at the Centre of the New Urban Agenda*, (2015). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Housing_at_the_centre.pdf

⁸⁶ U.N. *New Urban Agenda*, (2017). <https://uploads.habitat3.org/hb3/NUA-English.pdf>

the ecosystem that engage various community, development, and public- and private-sector actors.

Build and maintain strong people-public-private partnerships

The implementation of the SDGs requires **people-public-private partnerships at all levels**. Essential actors and contributors to implementing Target 11.1 are national/central and local governments, civil society organizations (including organizations representing slum dwellers), businesses, affected communities, international organizations, and the scientific community. Solutions require interventions across the housing ecosystem that engage various community, development and public- and private-sector actors. Because of the highly localised nature of the problem to be solved, cooperation between the central and local governments is essential.

Lessons learned from past slum development projects show that the **participation** of those affected is essential for succeeding in such projects. UN-HABITAT recognises the participatory slum upgrading approach as one of the most effective in improving the living standards of slum households,⁸⁷ as reflected by the flagship Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme launched in 2008.⁸⁸ A participatory approach is vital from the early stages of the planning, including problem mapping, to develop and implement context-specific programmes. Participatory planning may also be useful to map key stakeholders and shape existing power dynamics, e.g., in terms of empowerment of women. In order to achieve lasting results, the **institutionalisation of participation** is important.

- Action for the United Nations: Provide a stakeholder platform pulling from local, regional and global levels and partnerships, such as the SDG/NUA platform developed by UN-HABITAT to identify intersections of housing with other SDG targets and foster collaboration of partners to contribute to SDG 11.1.
- Action for governments at all levels: Integrate people-public-private partnerships in the implementation of SDG 11, specifically regarding progress toward the implementation of Target 11.1.
- Action for civil society: Engage with public and private actors in planning, implementing and monitoring programmes targeting progress on Target 11.1.

Improve data collection, monitoring and reporting

In order to track progress on Target 11.1, **data collection, monitoring and reporting need to improve, and more stakeholders** – member states, local governments, academia and civil society – need to be involved. Specific attention should be paid to a **people-centred approach** ensuring inclusion and engagement of communities. As to “citizens’ science, the initiative Know Your City, or KYC, a slum profiling programme supported by Slum Dwellers International; the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa, or UCLG-A; and Cities Alliance⁸⁹ is a prime example for such valuable additional data source.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ UN-HABITAT. *The Urban SDG Monitoring Series: Monitoring SDG Indicator 11.1.1.* (2019). https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/06/the_urban_sdg_monitoring_series_monitoring_sdg_indicator_11.1.1.pdf

⁸⁸ <https://mysup.org/>

⁸⁹ U.N. *Tracking Progress Towards Inclusive, Safe, and Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements – SDG 11 Synthesis Report*, High-Level Political Forum 2018, (2018). <https://unhabitat.org/sdg-11-synthesis-report-0>

⁹⁰ Slum Dwellers International. „The Know Your City Campaign.“ <https://sdinet.org/explore-our-data/>

- Actions for UN-HABITAT: Ensure regularly updated data on the components of Indicator 11.1 and provide disaggregated data according to the measured components of the U.N.'s definition of adequate housing, whether through SDGs or additional data sources. Create the composite index envisaged for reporting on Indicator 11.1.⁹¹ that combines the two components in one estimate to better track progress on Target 11.1. Develop methods for the spatial identification and area-based monitoring of slum areas. Devise strategies to overcome the limitations identified with respect to the computation of Indicator 11.1.1, in particular regarding homelessness.
- Actions for national governments: Carry out regular and reliable data collection and reporting for Indicator 11.1.1. Recognize civil society, local and regional government, and community-level data as valid inputs into national data provision and reporting.
- Actions for local and regional governments: Localize SDGs, including SDG 11, by developing voluntary local reviews. Recognize civil society, local and regional government and community-level data as valid inputs into national data provision and reporting.
- Actions for governments at all levels:
 - Include analysis and monitoring on Indicator 11.1.1 in reporting on sustainable development, particularly national governments in their VNRs and local governments in their VLRs.
 - Report critical issues and problems, not only achievements, as they can orient financing opportunities or development bodies to facilitate addressing these gaps.⁹²
 - Strengthen subnational-level data collection and make use of new possibilities brought by new information and communication technologies.
 - Action for civil society: Train and provide technical advice for national and local governments on the value of expanding data sources and the prioritization needed by national and local governments in collecting, monitoring and reporting on SDG-related indicators and other supplemental data.

Provide adequate funding

Several potential financing solutions for implementing SDG 11 identified by UNDP can be explored for the housing sector, such as those related to disaster risk insurance, crowdfunding, impact investment (social or environmental impact oriented), remittances (diaspora financing), voluntary standards (finance), lotteries, social and development impact bonds (results-based financing), environmental trust funds, public guarantees, and taxes on fuel.⁹³

Furthermore, Habitat for Humanity International recommends housing financial solutions focusing on “subsidies for affordable housing and rental properties; incentives for housing finance access; reduce regulatory barriers for housing financing options; microfinance and other

⁹¹ U.N. *Tracking Progress Towards Inclusive, Safe, and Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements – SDG 11 Synthesis Report*, High-Level Political Forum 2018, (2018). <https://unhabitat.org/sdg-11-synthesis-report-0>

⁹² IISD. “Governments Adopt Four-Year Guidance to UN Development Systems.” U.N. General Assembly 2020 QCP. (2021). http://sdg.iisd.org/news/governments-adopt-four-year-guidance-to-un-development-system/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=SDG%20Update%20-%202014%20January%202021&utm_content=SDG%20Update%20-%202014%20January%202021+CID_efe3482c8f4b7129dd9d04c63c46ef25&utm_source=cm&utm_term=Readhttps://www.sdfinance.undp.org/content/sdfinance/en/home/sdg/goal-11--sustainable-cities-and-communities.html

⁹³ UNDP. „Financing Solutions for SDG11.” <https://www.sdfinance.undp.org/content/sdfinance/en/home/sdg/goal-11--sustainable-cities-and-communities.html>

flexible lending instruments for incremental building and home improvement; incentivize public-private investment in infrastructure that supports housing development.”⁹⁴

Investing in housing can support the implementation of multiple SDGs. For example, investing in building renovation contributes to reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (SDG 13), energy efficiency (SDG 7), and job creation and activation of local supply chains (SDG 8).⁹⁵ By addressing goals and targets in clusters, depending on the context and cross-sectorial approach, more can be achieved with limited resources.

Providing calculation for the financing gap toward Target 11.1 can highlight the importance this target has for reaching SDG 11, direct investments and aid toward the most critical regions, and enable comparison.

6. Conclusions

Despite commitment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Goal 11, Target 11.1 — “By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums” — in the years since the adoption of the Agenda, **global data have shown a regression** in meeting the target, reversing previous progress. The global backtracking of the target can be attributed mainly to the **increase in urban slum population in some regions, notably North Africa, Western Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.** During 2014-18, the global proportion of the urban slum population increased from 23% to 24%. Meanwhile, the **decadelong increase in the absolute number of people living in urban slums continued, so that by 2018 over a billion people lived in urban slum households.** By 2030, the number of urban slum dwellers is estimated to exceed 1.2 billion, with the largest proportional increase in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Such trends are driven by a multitude of factors, including rapid urbanization, natural population increase, climate change impact, local political and economic crises, and systemic inequalities, along with deficient governance, urbanization, housing and land policies, and housing finance. Notwithstanding the fact that **several of these factors are related to macro-level socioeconomic trends** outside the scope of housing and urban programs and policies, past **interventions of slum upgrading and measures to prevent the formation of new slums were inadequate** to address the problem of slum households. Critical issues hindering progress on Target 11.1 include **a lack of prioritization of housing in development programs, including a lack of adequate funding, lack of recognition of the complexity of the housing ecosystem, lack of cooperation among key stakeholders, lack of progress on other SDGs, and shortcomings of data collection and reporting.**

Meanwhile, examples for successfully reducing the proportion of slum dwellers are offered from Trinidad and Tobago, Ecuador, Sierra Leone and Madagascar, and at the city level in Guangzhou, China.

As of yet, **no updated global data are available concerning housing affordability,** which is intended to measure other forms of inadequate housing not covered by the definition of slums.

⁹⁴ Habitat for Humanity International. “Global Policy and Advocacy Agenda,” February 2020. <https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/Global-Policy-and-Advocacy-Agenda.pdf>

⁹⁵ European Commission. *A Renovation Wave for Europe: Greening Our Buildings, Creating Jobs, Improving Lives*, (2020). https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/eu_renovation_wave_strategy.pdf

The lack of such data significantly **hinders the tracking of progress on Target 11.1 and leads to the underestimation of the target population.**

This is within the context of an **existing global housing affordability crisis**, which UN-HABITAT has publicly raised the alarm on since the mid-2010s. While affordability is often recognized in developed country contexts, it remains an issue in all regions of the world. Based on housing cost burden in Sub-Saharan Africa, more than half of the urban households live in unaffordable housing, spending more than 30% of their monthly income on housing. This is followed by Western Asia, North Africa, and Central and South Asia, where nearly one-third of the households experience housing unaffordability.

In order to reverse global regression on Target 11.1, action must be taken in the following areas during the United Nations' Decade of Action to Achieve the SDGs: putting **housing at the center** of programs and policies concerning cities, including the provision of adequate funding for interventions; applying a **housing ecosystems perspective** in the planning, design, implementation and monitoring of housing interventions; and **building and maintaining strong people-public-private partnerships**. In addition, **improvement of data collection, reporting and monitoring** concerning Target 11.1 is urgently needed, with special regard to updated global data on affordability, data disaggregated for different criteria of inadequate housing, and the calculation of a composite index that combines the two components of Indicator 11.1.1 (proportion of urban slum population and proportion of urban population in unaffordable housing) in one estimate. In data collection, reporting and monitoring, specific attention should be paid to a **people-centered approach** ensuring that communities are included and engaged.

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About Habitat for Humanity International

Driven by the vision that everyone needs a decent place to live, Habitat for Humanity began in 1976 as a grassroots effort on a community farm in southern Georgia. The Christian housing organization has since grown to become a leading global nonprofit working in local communities across all 50 states in the U.S., and in more than 70 countries. Families and individuals in need of a hand up partner with Habitat for Humanity to build or improve a place they can call home. Habitat homeowners help build their own homes alongside volunteers and pay an affordable mortgage. Through financial support, volunteering or adding a voice to support affordable housing, everyone can help families achieve the strength, stability and self-reliance they need to build better lives for themselves. Through shelter, we empower.

To learn more, visit www.habitat.org/emea.

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Habitat for Humanity currently has programs and partnerships in Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia

About Build Solid Ground

Build Solid Ground is an awareness raising and citizenship engagement project funded by the European Union grant under the Development Education and Awareness Raising program. Over three years, 14 partners from seven EU countries have worked as a consortium to inform and educate young European on global development issues.

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