U20 2025 Webinar Concept Note:

"Advancing Local Social Inclusion and Equity for All through Public Services and Care-based Approaches"

15 May 2025, 13:00 – 14:45 SAST, MS Teams Platform

A truly thriving city ensures that every resident feels valued, heard, and empowered to participate in its development. Political leadership from G20 members can enable social cohesion and deal with the drivers of social conflict. Cities that prioritize care-based approaches in the realization of their political priorities — led by national and sub national elected and appointed officials who govern differently, place the dignity and wellbeing of their residents at the centre — understand that all who reside within their borders are essential to their success.

Cities across the U20 are vibrant centers of diversity and opportunity. Yet, national and urban leaders grapple with persistent social inequalities, hindering the full participation and contribution of marginalized groups and detracting from the health and wellbeing of citizens.

Adopting a social inclusion/cohesion lens in the U20

What does it mean to take social cohesion seriously in G20 cities where millions of people fail to access the urban dividend or thrive from the prosperity of the societies in which they live? The answers are not obvious or uniform: the U20 webinars and consultations will explore the use of social cohesion tools to tackle urban exclusion and inequity, learning from the ways that states and their local and regional governments promote inclusion and equity and finding new ways to prioritise the marginalised.

1. We are witnessing city specific forms of discrimination and intolerance against historically marginalized populations including women, the poor, black and other ethnic minorities, queer and migrants. Recognizing the unequal distribution of social burdens, such as the care burden on women, is key for developing impactful policies that foster social inclusion. Mitigating the spatial, economic, structural and cultural discrimination that is the hallmark of contemporary urban life in the G20, entails the decriminalisation of particular persons and groups whether in respect of their living spaces, access to services or their livelihood ventures. We will consider what measures U20 cities can take to enshrine the rights of people in the contemporary city.

2. Some parts of the G20, especially the countries of the African Union, are facing a youth population bulge. Other G20 cities face challenges of ageing populations. Everywhere, the shifting demography of urban areas presents general challenges of urban management and specific challenges for different sectors of the population. How will youth be integrated into societies where they are entering their adulthood in economic environments that cannot absorb them? What are the social implications of this and what spatial and non-spatial (cultural, political, educational, health, other) inclusion measures are necessary, at the city scale, to ensure that the aged, youth and disabled are not isolated or alienated?

3. In a post pandemic context, G20 members must support cities to (re)create and reimagine themselves as spaces that are convivial and sociable in a world where there is increasing isolation and alienation and where new economies and workplaces are not obvious sites of personal connection. How, for example, do cities mitigate negative mental health impacts of isolated living, or the increasing informalisation of work with the related uncertainty and lack of protection that brings? How do they cater to and encourage healthy and connected interactions? We will debate what can be done in city design, public spaces, programming, governance practices and other sectors to stimulate spatial integration and social cohesion community engagement brings. The sociability of public space is an important measure of inclusion in cities.

Tackling inequity and exclusion through day-to-day local public service provision

Urban residents require access to urban opportunities to realise their potential; the means to earn an income; access to affordable and proximate physical and social public services; protection from violence and environmental harm. Key measures that provide exponentially beneficial access for marginalised urban residents typically fall in the purview of local and regional governments. Actions local and regional governments prioritise in addressing contemporary concerns of social exclusion and inequality vary across locations and can include a very wide range of interventions, such as: urban data science/knowledge sharing, primary health care and environmental health; food security; access to early childhood care and education; inclusionary economic opportunity; affordable public transport; reducing the digital divide; secure tenure and social cohesion.

While all are relevant, for this webinar we will focus on actions which the U20 Sherpas have highlighted as priorities. These are sketched below.

Secure tenure and housing: The absence of secure tenure denies residents a foothold in the city or the possibility of realising the asset value of their shelter and consolidates social polarisation and segregation. Instead many urban residents face the constant threat of eviction and lack the security to invest in improving their homes. Securing tenure requires reducing the regulatory and institutional barriers of specific contexts, to develop practical solutions that are implementable in different cities. It also cannot be separated from the need to increase the supply of affordable land and housing, as the shortages of both force many into unauthorized shelter options. This needs to be addressed by stimulating supply (and prioritizing public supply) and removing regulatory barriers and other barriers to the provision of affordable legally sanctioned land and housing

Migration: Successful towns and economies attract local and international migrants, and migrants are vital contributors to innovative and dynamic economies and societies as a whole. This is a virtuous cycle. Cities at their hearts are cosmopolitan hubs, yet too often are marred by xenophobia and anti-immigration pronouncements. This requires states and local governments to uphold a rights-based approach, to tackle violence against migrants and foreign owned businesses; to re-orientate the public discussion and the political discourse by publicising the contribution of migrants in urban places, societies and economies; and to offer migrants the necessary public services (housing, transport, employment opportunities, education...) and conditions (care, safety, quality of life) to thrive equally to their local peers. The building of social cohesion further requires the establishment of platforms and dialogues that allow community stakeholders to find common ground on issues they can address and advocate for collectively.

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Primary health care and environmental health: Access to basic and affordable health care and a safe and secure environment is the foundation of universal urban citizenship. Robust systems of disease prevention, availability of clean water and air, as well as having urban fire protection and disaster risk mitigation systems in place ensures collective urban health and wellbeing. When some residents are excluded from these basic health and environmental services, everyone in the city is exposed to risks of disease and environmental degradation. Moreover, priority must be given to local initiatives that address the social determinants of health—particularly access to care, nutritious food, safe public spaces, mental health, loneliness and social inclusion in the era of digital transformation. Equally important is the recognition and support of informal and everyday practices of care—those often unseen acts of nurturing, mutual aid, and community support that sustain life and wellbeing in homes, neighbourhoods, and public spaces. Together, these contribute to advancing a caring cities approach..

Connected city - Public mobility: Spatial disparities and a lack of affordable public transport lock marginalised residents out of opportunity and deepen their time poverty. A city that works for the poor, works for everyone. States need to plan, design and prioritise resource spending on public transport infrastructures that provide affordable means of connecting people to social, cultural, economic and environmental opportunities and of increasing supply chain efficiencies. These services must increase coverage to underserved areas at affordable rates for poor and vulnerable residents.

Connected city – reducing the digital divide: Marginalised residents are doubly excluded from a connected city by the digital divide. This lack of access to digital technology and digital literacy, which takes multiple forms, exacerbates social inequalities in education, jobs, access to government, etc. It deepens urban exclusion by effectively shutting out marginalized populations within cities from vital services, opportunities, and information.

Informal work is work: An inclusionary economic approach requires that special attention be given to marginalised urban workers and economic units. The exclusion from livelihood opportunities in cities links directly with constraints to enterprise. This includes limitations on the micro and small enterprises that are classified informal. The informal economy is a persistent feature of many G20 countries' labour markets but remains outside the state's protection and regulation. It provides livelihood opportunities through various activities including informal trading, small scale construction, social services and care work. The informal economy is associated with innovation, improvisation and opportunity but also low incomes, marginalisation and exclusion. The risk of inaction or worse, repression of the informal economy by public authorities, is that it pits local governments against the most vulnerable of its population. Local governments, with the support of national governments, have the duty to recognize and support informal workers with targeted policies.

Importance of data/knowledge: The nature and scope of exclusion and inequity varies from city to city. For this reason, it is essential that governments develop a place- and group-based specific grasp of the causes and impacts of these features. An understanding of the experiences, costs, impacts and dimensions of inequalities in each city and the elements of city governance and infrastructure that impact exclusion and inequity are crucial to targeting resources effectively, for which reason data disaggregated by geography, gender, age, migratory status and other conditions/situations is essential. In the first instance it is essential that states commit to building data systems for rigorous and transparent monitoring of equity, inequality and exclusion within their cities. This requires the development of shared knowledge platforms informed by evidence-based

research, surveys, and stakeholder engagement, also acknowledging other actors as critical producers of knowledge in their diversity.

Participatory governance: Overall, the approaches taken in advancing social inclusion and equity in various sectors of cities require leaders to champion policies that foster participatory governance, inclusive urban planning, and economic empowerment for all residents. Collaboration between spheres of state, city governments, civil society, and the private sector is essential for developing targeted interventions that address urban poverty, promote gender equity, and integrate marginalised communities into the fabric of city life.

This webinar will offer a platform to collectively address these challenges, create opportunities to learn from each other and champion the city-scale application of the principles of social inclusion and equity.

This webinar aims to:

- Debate best practices and innovative solutions for promoting care, social inclusion and equity in urban settings.

- Identify concrete joint actions and recommendations that U20 cities can call on G20 to implement.

- Strengthen the collective voice of U20 cities in advocating for inclusive and equitable urban development on a global stage.

- Contribute to the ongoing global dialogue on sustainable urban development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals because cities are lead implementers of 65% of the SDG indicators.

The Challenge:

Marginalized communities often face systemic barriers to protection of their fundamental rights in cities. Residents are excluded from essential public services, to the detriment of their and others' health and wellbeing. Social exclusion undermines social cohesion, economic vitality, and the overall well-being of our cities.

This requires a rethinking of the way our cities are planned and function, in terms of the design, construction and management of the spatial and non-spatial infrastructures and service programmes governments execute. It requires responsive, city-led, country-owned, and globally supported programs that proactively support the inclusion of marginalised communities and persons. Building on existing G20 commitments[1] to fight hunger, poverty, and inequality in all its dimensions, we must accelerate roadmaps for inclusive urban development. This requires a considered social cohesion-centred approach to upholding the effective functioning and enduring vitality of the cities of the U20.

It is clear that social cohesion in U20 cities is a multifaceted issue that intersects with urban governance, economic inclusion, public services, and human rights. While cities must tackle discrimination, exclusion, and structural inequities, the scale and complexity of these challenges make it essential to prioritize key issues. This

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[1] G20 Rio de Janeiro Leaders' Declaration, 2024, Brazil.

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requires moving beyond isolated interventions to a strategic approach that elevates social cohesion from the urban agenda to the national stage. By focusing on targeted, high-impact actions—such as affordable housing, human mobility and a caring city approach—cities can drive meaningful change. This webinar will provide a crucial space for exchanging knowledge and shaping policies that make inclusion a fundamental pillar of urban development.

U20 Cities: A Collective Voice for Change:

This webinar on urban social inclusion and equity will leverage the collective experience and expertise of preeminent urbanist thinkers and practitioners who recognize that cities are at the forefront of addressing these issues and offer unique insights into practical solutions. By learning from each other, we can develop a powerful, unified voice advocating for change on a global scale.

Guiding Questions & Proposed Joint Solutions:

This interactive webinar will explore the following key questions, fostering a dialogue aimed at identifying concrete joint solutions and recommendations that U20 cities can champion:

1. Equitable Public Services: How can cities redesign public services to better support health, well-being and equitable access for all residents, particularly marginalized communities?

2. Affordable Housing: What innovative strategies can help cities deliver affordable housing at scale despite resource constraints?

3. How can local governments uphold principles of social inclusion and equity in addressing migration and displacement, especially when national government policies or political sentiment create barriers to integration—leading to exclusion by default and policy inaction at the city level?

4. What strategies can cities adopt to better anticipate and safely accommodate the increasing numbers of displaced people affected by climate migration?

5. What does it mean to take social inclusion seriously in cities—and firmly enshrine the rights of people of all ethnicities, classes, genders, sexual orientations and religions to thrive safely—where many people are increasingly marginalised and excluded in polarised societies that are conflict ridden?

6. Is there a key message that you recommend cities communicate to the G20 on the topic?

Facilitator

Representative from United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), one of the U20 permanent Co-Conveners.

Speakers

- **Susan Parnell:** is a Global Challenges Research Professor of urban geography focused on urban policy, local government, poverty reduction, and environmental justice, based at the University of Bristol and Emeritus Professor at the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town.

- **Gautam Bhan:** is an urbanist whose work focuses on urban poverty, inequality, social protection and housing. He is Associate Dean, School of Human Development, as well as Senior Lead, Academics & Research, at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS).

- **Loren B Landau:** is Professor of Migration and Development at the University of Oxford and Research Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand's African Centre for Migration & Society in Johannesburg. Together with Jean Pierre Misago, he co-founded and co-directs the Wits-Oxford Mobility Governance Lab (MGL).

For any questions about this webinar contact: Harvey Phalatse harveyp@joburg.org.za

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Agenda

Time allocation		Role
5 Mins	Welcome	Executive Mayor
10 Mins	Introduction & Opening Input:	Facilitator UCLG
15 Mins	Global & African Perspective **Urban Perspective – South Africa** Caring and Connected Cities: Reimagining urban space to better support health, well-being and inclusion.	**Susan Parnell,** Global Challenges Research Professor, Cape Town & Bristol
15 Mins	Global North & Indian Perspective **Affordable Housing perspective - India** From Poverty to Inclusion: Access to affordable and adequate housing as a cornerstone for equitable urban futures.	**Gautam Bhan,** Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Delhi
15 Mins	African Perspective, including secondary cities **Peopled & Mobility Centred Perspective – North East Africa** How Cities Can Support: Rethinking human mobility between urban archipelagos in today's complex environment.	**Loren Landau,** Professor of migration & mobility, Johannesburg & Oxford
30 Mins	Facilitated Q&A	Facilitator
10 Mins	Summary: Key urban messages	Facilitator

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