



## Webinar: Accelerating Decent Work and Economic Growth for a Resilient Urban Recovery in the Era of COVID-19

**Date: 17 September 2020**  
**4:00pm (Republic of Korea), 12:30pm (India), 9:00am (Geneva)**

### Concept Note

*"We need to turn the recovery into a real opportunity to do things right for the future" – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres*

**Registration Link: <https://bit.ly/3h41lfi>**

#### Background

The current COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted the livelihoods and job stability of many cities worldwide, including both formal and informal business sectors. The United Nations has noted that job losses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic are leaving up to half the global workforce – 1.6 billion people – without livelihoods and sixty million more people will be pushed into extreme poverty. The world is experiencing a loss of \$8.5 trillion in global output – the sharpest contraction since the Great Depression of the 1930s.<sup>1</sup> The Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 8, focus on promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and full and productive employment and decent work for all. While the pace of global economic growth was already slowing before the pandemic, its impacts on the global economic downturn are continuing.

Cities play a leading role in generating national employment, productivity and economic development, with over 80 per cent of GDP coming from cities.<sup>2</sup> However, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the International Labour Organization notes that more than [one in six](#) young people have lost their jobs since the pandemic began and those that are still at work have seen their hours reduced. Today, the world's youth population is 1.21 billion or over 15% of the global population, mostly located in urban centres.<sup>3</sup> The UN Secretary-General has underscored that local governments are already taking action to protect local household incomes and access to essential services - from prohibiting evictions during the crisis to putting

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<sup>1</sup>United Nations (2020). Retrieved from:

[https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/hl\\_event\\_financing\\_covid19\\_general\\_introduction-5-25-20.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/hl_event_financing_covid19_general_introduction-5-25-20.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>World Bank (2019). Retrieved from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview>

<sup>3</sup> "The commitments linked to Sustainable Development Goal 8 — promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all — will not be met unless action is taken to address the fact that youth are still far more likely than their adult counterparts to be unemployed, underemployed, employed in the informal sector, or among the working poor" UN DESA World Youth Report (2020). Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2020/07/2020-World-Youth-Report-FULL-FINAL.pdf>

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in place new clean water stations in the most vulnerable areas – but more must be done to strengthen the capacities of local governments.<sup>4</sup>

Current urbanization trends are often accompanied by significant social and environmental challenges, such as the lack of access to adequate, affordable urban land and housing options, urban infrastructure and basic services for a growing number of citizens, who suffer from rising inequality and exclusion, unemployment, food insecurity and extreme poverty. This is particularly true in developing countries, where 95% of urban expansion will take place over the next decades and where the challenges of COVID-19's socio-economic impacts are being felt most.<sup>5</sup> It is also a matter of major concern that cities and urban areas in developing countries are already accommodating most of the 883 million people living in slums, many of whom are often working in the informal labor sector.<sup>6</sup>

Local governments are currently facing a double challenge of restoring life as normal and accelerating growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. Local officials can play a central role in ensuring a swift and sustainable recovery to restore and accelerate progress in delivering the Sustainable Development Goals during the coming decade.

### **Objective and Content**

This webinar is part of a series of online webinars exploring specific sessions under the 2020 International Mayors Forum. The 2020 International Mayors Forum examines the socio-economic impacts of the current crisis on cities and how local governments and local actors can work together for an inclusive resilient recovery and sustainable urban future.

This first webinar of the series will focus on solutions for local governments to accelerate sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, in line with SDG 8. It aims to equip local governments and local actors with knowledge to move from a decade of recovery to a decade of action for the 2030 Agenda.

### **Speakers**

- Moderator: Mr. Jean D'Aragnon, Officer-in-Charge, UNOSD
- Ms. Laurence KWARK, Secretary General, Global Social Economy Forum (GSEF)
- Mr. Carlos Carrion-Crespo, Specialist, Public Services, International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Ms. Najat Zarrouk, Director of the African Local Government Academy (ALGA), United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG-Africa)
- Mr. Ilcheong Yi, Senior Research Coordinator, Social Dimensions of Sustainable Development Programme, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)

### **Organizers**

The United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)

### **Target Audience**

This webinar aims to engage sub-national government representatives, local government leaders, and national institutions across the UN Member States. The webinar will also be

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<sup>4</sup> "By focusing on high ecological transformation and job creation, stimulus packages can steer growth towards a low-carbon, resilient pathway and advance the Sustainable Development Goals." United Nations Secretary-General (2020) Accessed at: <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/covid-19-urban-world>

<sup>5</sup> United Nations (2019) Accessed at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>

<sup>6</sup> United Nations (2019) Accessed at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>

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open to non-government experts working in the areas of SDG implementation, decent work, local economic growth, employment policies and programmes, enterprise and entrepreneurship, and youth employment topics. The webinar is also open to academia, youth, and other interested stakeholders to ensure an inclusive and integrated discussion on accelerated local solutions for the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.

### **Agenda**

The webinar will last for 1 hour:

- **Opening (3-5 mins)**
- **Presentations (7 minutes per speaker)**
  - Ms. Laurence KWARAK, Secretary General, Global Social Economy Forum
  - Mr. Carlos Carrion-Crespo, Specialist, Public Services, ILO
- **Pause for questions (5 minutes)**
  - Ms. Najat Zarrouk, Director of the African Local Government Academy (ALGA) UCLG-Africa
  - Mr. Ilcheong Yi, Senior Research Coordinator, Social Dimensions of Sustainable Development Programme, UNRISD
- **Q&A (15 mins)**
- **Final reflections (3 minutes)**
- **Closing wrap-up (2 minutes)**

### **Key questions**

- What are the current barriers for local governments to achieve SDG 8 and where are the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic most challenging currently?
- What bright spots do we see among local government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic especially in the jobs sector?
- What are some model responses or public programmes observed that can especially targets vulnerable populations such as youth, women and others for a job-led recovery at local level?
- How can social economy play a role in accelerating decent jobs and economic growth for urban recovery?
- How can local governments engage with civil society and create transformative partnerships to accelerate recovery and progress for all?
- What is the role of public services, especially essential ones, in creating decent work opportunities in the COVID-19 recovery period?
- How can local administrations balance the increasing needs for essential public services and ensure safe and healthy working conditions for all their employees in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How can employment protection measures support access to public services?
- What are some gaps that can be addressed by the international community or national governments in supporting local governments at this time?
- What are the accelerators that can spur a jobs-led recovery in local areas and how will these accelerators differ from region to region?
- What can local government leaders and local public officials do to recover better and ensure resilience as they rebuild local economies and jobs?

### **Contact Information**

For any questions or comments please contact Ms. Sara Castro-Hallgren, Programme Management Expert, UNOSD at [sara.castrohallgren@un.org](mailto:sara.castrohallgren@un.org)

*The webinar will be conducted in English.*