



Empowering Local Governments on Inclusive Pandemic Response



An outcome document of
Cities for All Learning Series
“Equity and Access in Times of Pandemic”

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Review Partners



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Purpose of the Document

During the global pandemic of 2020, the world faced an unprecedented public health challenge. These recommendations were developed over the course of 9 weeks of intensive learning in the Equity and Access Live Learning Series organized by World Enabled and Cities for All partners and signatories.

These recommendations help cities understand the challenges facing persons with various types of disabilities, older persons, and other key stakeholders. These stakeholders include young people, women, migrants, and indigenous communities, who must all be included in the development and implementation of urban development policies and strategies. However, numerous existing challenges are amplified during public health emergency. In an effort to build back better, we should understand the inherent vulnerabilities and systemic challenges to ensuring that no-one and no city is left behind. These include:

- **Rampant discrimination** against persons with disabilities and older persons particularly in physical and digital infrastructure of cities.
 - There is a need for more thorough consideration of barriers to participation and frameworks and platforms overcoming them.
- **Lack of awareness** of global standards on accessibility and universal design principles.
 - There is a need to communicate and share best practices around accessibility and highlight and celebrate examples of successful implementations of universal design principles in urban development.

- **The role of local governments** in monitoring, reporting, and enforcement mechanisms that can ensure accessibility in the built and digital environment.
 - There is a need for greater coordination among all stakeholders involved in urban development to guide policies, implementation, and adoption of accessibility standards and universal design principles.

This document serves as a global call to action to highlight commitments and actions that promote inclusion, accessibility, and non-discrimination during a pandemic outbreak. It aims to underscore recommended measures and interventions to enhance pandemic preparedness and recovery at the local level.

Foreword

This document shares experiences and insights from those who gathered through the multi-stakeholder platform, Cities for All, and the learnings derived through a coordinated effort on disability inclusive and accessible pandemic response. It has been influenced by and developed as an extension of the [Cities for All Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities](#) and is in line with critical international agreements such as the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), the Inclusion Targets of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#), the [WHO's Age-friendly Cities and Communities Framework](#), the [New Urban Agenda](#), the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#), the [Charter on Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#), and the [Marrakesh Treaty](#).

Local and regional governments will be key actors in advancing the current legal obligations of universal accessibility and implementing an inclusive and fully participatory response of persons with disabilities and older persons. Nevertheless, local and regional governments need to have a supportive environment at all levels of government to be empowered to create cities for all.

The actions proposed in this document to empower local governments in an inclusive pandemic response are in line with the [Joint Declaration of local governments and persons with disabilities in relation to Covid-19](#), signed by the Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the United Nations on Disability and Accessibility and Dr. Victor Santiago Pineda, President of World Enabled and the founder of the Cities4All Network (See Annex I), acknowledging that in order to fulfill this mandate, local and regional governments need to be supported in capacity-building.

Special considerations should be made to the specific recommendations and statements of the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility, the recommendations of the United Nations Independent Expert on the Rights of Older Persons, and the commitments to a forthcoming Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

An inclusive and participatory recovery must engage diverse stakeholders. Such processes are most effective when developed with and by affected citizens, government agencies, academia, and those in the private and not-for-profit sectors. Inclusive urban policies rely on a range of factors to ensure success. This includes effective plans, legislation, programs, and strategies. Success is also reliant on capacity building, the collection and use of disaggregated data and statistics for implementation at all levels of government, the allocation of specific budgets, and participatory monitoring by organized civil society of persons with disabilities and older persons. This range of factors must be in place to ensure universal accessibility in line with human rights principles throughout the policy cycle, from design to implementation to ensure policy coherence at all levels of delivery.

Any call to action for, with, and by local and regional governments must reinforce an equally substantial commitment of all layers of government and stakeholders involved (e.g., the corporate sector, civil society, urban planners, academia, etc.).

For this reason, the set of recommendations showcased in this document will serve as a guidance:

- **To national governments and national institutions to enact all the necessary measures that are required to empower local governments to support cities resiliency to pandemics, disasters, and emergencies**, by setting in place any normative and regulatory frameworks, awareness-raising and capacity building programs,

budgetary allocations, and participatory and inclusive planning processes, which serve to this aim;

- **To local and regional governments and all relevant stakeholders** (e.g., the private sector, civil society organizations, organizations of persons with disabilities and older persons, academia, etc.), **to identify interventions to be executed in order to build back better after the Covid-19 pandemic and lead towards a more inclusive, safe, and sustainable urban future.**

Through this document, the Cities For All partners and signatories reaffirms, even in times of the Covid-19 pandemic, its determination to actively support cities, other human settlements, and other urban stakeholders to advance the human rights principles of non-discrimination, equality, inclusion, and participation.

Cities that are resilient adopt innovative policies that advance universal inclusion and accessibility for all persons. Cities and human settlements should work together to advance and protect the dignity and aspirations of all persons, including persons with disabilities and older persons.



Victor Pineda
President, World Enabled
Founder, Cities for All



Maria Soledad Cisternas
UN Special Envoy on
Disability and Accessibility

Global Compact Principle #1

Non-Discrimination



(1.1) Ensure that all layers of government, each within its own jurisdiction, firmly oppose discriminatory practices against persons with disabilities and older persons during pandemics or other public health emergencies.



(1.2) Ensure that local governments, with the support from regional and national governments and discussed with civil society, adopt policy measures to guarantee the inclusion of all persons with disabilities in pandemic responses. Groups such as children, women, deaf persons, persons with deafblindness, intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, minority ethnic groups, displaced persons, migrants and indigenous persons with disabilities should be given additional considerations and protections.



(1.3) Ensure that regional and local governments actively promote programmes to guarantee that health care services, treatments (including possible vaccine provisions), facilities, goods, technologies, and hospitals do not discriminate and are accessible to all, reach all human settlements, and do not reduce the quality of services, exclude, deny services to any person based on disability, gender, age, or any other personal characteristics.



(1.4) Ensure that employers, including local governments, provide equal career opportunities, training and support for flexible work. In cases where remote work is required, employers should provide reasonable accommodations without discrimination.



(1.5) Ensure that regional and local governments actively promote policies and programmes to guarantee that existing and emerging technologies, online platforms, and virtual learning do not reinforce or amplify exclusion and socio-economic disparities during pandemics.




(1.6) Ensure that local governments deliver accessible public information and public communications that is free of discrimination or bias and is respectful of all population groups including persons with disabilities and older persons.





(1.7) Ensure that local governments enact responses that uphold the central human rights principle of the right to life and strengthen the implementation of human rights frameworks, namely the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Inclusion Targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the WHO's Age-friendly Cities and Communities Framework, the New Urban Agenda, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.


Global Compact Principle #2


Accessibility


 **(2.1)** Ensure local governments guarantee access to clear, consistent communications via multiple means, formats, languages, and channels. Consider that many persons with disabilities, older persons, or people living in poverty or informal and temporary settings may not have access to formal education, internet services, or mainstream communications.


 **(2.2)** Ensure that local governments actively develop programmes and policies to design transportation infrastructure and mobility solutions that are safe, inclusive, affordable, accessible, and responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities and older persons.


 **(2.3)** Ensure accessibility standards are enforced at the national and local level to guarantee the proper design of inclusive urban infrastructure. Consider that new, existing, or temporary testing facilities, temporary programs, medical centers, housing and other public buildings are often not responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities and older persons.

 **(2.4)** Ensure that all layers of government, each within its own jurisdiction and mandate, actively promote programmes and policies that guarantee sanitation and testing systems are free, available, efficient, appropriate, safe, and accessible.

 **(2.5)** Ensure local governments guarantee health care providers offer continuity of community-based services including those provided by private or non-governmental partners and that accessible and confidential feedback mechanisms are put in place.

 **(2.6)** Ensure that local governments design and implement environmental and community health projects (including temporary ones) that are sustainable and inclusive. Consider that mainstreaming universal design principles¹ builds healthier, more equitable, and more resilient cities.

 **(2.7)** Ensure all layers of government actively promote policies such as shelter in place ordinances, school closures, physical distance signals that are accessible and responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities and older persons as well as their families, caretakers, and service providers.

 **(2.8)** Ensure that during future public health emergencies, national governments and international organizations have agile regulatory structures in place to guide the availability, accessibility, and usability of digital services.

¹ <http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/The-7-Principles/>



(2.9) Ensure local governments support programmes to make online platforms for working, learning, and communicating accessible and respectful of the different learning requirements of individuals. Mechanisms should be put in place to improve access and training for persons with disabilities and older persons to IT devices such as smartphones and iPads to help bridge the digital divide.

Global Compact Principle #3

Participation



(3.1) Ensure that local governments allow for the active participation of persons with disabilities, older persons, including other minorities/groups (such as indigenous, community organizers), and their representative organizations by minimizing barriers to participation and enabling participatory mechanisms.



(3.2) Ensure that local leaders partner with a broad range of stakeholders including urban planners, public health experts, civil society organizations and under-represented groups, including persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, to design recovery plans that properly assess urban landscapes and their hazards, risks, and vulnerabilities in order to predict, avoid, and be able to react to emerging disease outbreaks more effectively.



(3.3) Ensure that local leaders develop recovery plans guaranteeing the development of recovery networks that promote individual and organizational preparedness of persons with disabilities and older persons that includes clear monitoring and feedback mechanisms as well as goals to build back better.



(3.4) Ensure that local governments create risk management plans in consultation with persons with disabilities and older persons, and their representative organizations, to guarantee continuity in the delivery of essential city services.



(3.5) Ensure that local governments actively support programs to guarantee that emerging technologies are accessible, maximize the benefits they yield, and do not cause harm, by designing them in collaboration with civil society organizations, academia, technology companies, the private sector, policymakers, persons with disabilities organizations (DPOs), and organizations of older people.



(3.6) Ensure that local governments actively support programs to engage persons with disabilities and older persons, including representative organizations, to participate in the design, development, and implementation of technological learning tools and virtual learning platforms.



(3.7) Ensure that local governments actively support programs to guarantee that the efficacy and acceptability of online learning platforms and technological learning tools are continuously monitored by engaging users, especially persons with disabilities, older persons, and those most at risk of exclusion, encouraging them to provide feedback to help address problems accordingly.

Global Compact Principle #4

Inclusive Policies & Programs



(4.1) Ensure that national and local governments adopt policy measures to buffer the economic impacts of pandemics and safeguard income security and the livelihoods of all persons with disabilities and older persons. Consider that the latter are especially vulnerable during public health emergencies so must not be allowed to fall behind.



(4.2) Ensure that all layers of government adopt policy measures for pandemic readiness and recovery response that consider the needs of persons with disabilities within humanitarian settings, including displaced persons, women with disabilities in vulnerable situations, and those living in refugee or migrant camps, informal settlements, and urban slums.



(4.3) Ensure that local governments reduce social isolation and facilitate channels of communications with persons with disabilities and older persons in order to respond to their needs and rights, including accessible online or phone-based consultations, dedicated hotlines, and telemedicine services to continue treatment programs if needed.



(4.4) Ensure that local governments guarantee that health and social care workers, and related community-based services staff that work with persons with disabilities and older persons, are provided with adequate protective equipment for sanitation, protection, and hygiene purposes as well as any necessary training that takes into account additional needs or risks posed by providing assistance during times of pandemic.



(4.5) Ensure that national and local governments enact public health measures that take into account the rights and needs of persons with disabilities and older persons to live independently in the community. In particular, consider the importance of visitor policies in residential services, so that access to family members and essential service providers can be maintained, or protocols for children with autism to be allowed in the street for a short period of time.



(4.6) Ensure that local level pandemic responses inform more equitable and inclusive short-term and long-term urban development policies including effective and transparent procurement processes and monitoring mechanisms in consultation with persons with disabilities and older persons.



(4.7) Ensure that urban planners and local governments focus on peri-urban and rural-to-urban zones, as outbreaks often start at “the edges of cities”, by putting in place effective communication and timely information sharing mechanisms along with strategies to manage and transfer resources to the points of greatest need.

Global Compact Principle #5

Capacity Building



(5.1) Ensure that local governments actively support programs to strengthen the capacity of persons with disabilities and older persons and their representative organizations to effectively engage in emergency planning and response and that these programmes are designed to meet their needs.



(5.2) Ensure that capacity building in disability mainstreaming is promoted across all government sectors to strengthen local government capacity in rendering any interventions more accessible and inclusive.



(5.3) Ensure that local governments actively support programs guaranteeing that the closure of schools/universities or remote learning and training programs due to quarantines do not leave behind persons with disabilities or older persons. This can be achieved by facilitating access to published materials and books in line with the Marrakesh Treaty and by providing appropriate digital training, support, adapted materials, and accessible technologies to utilize them.



(5.4) Ensure that local governments monitor and assess the impact of emerging technologies on all persons under the jurisdiction of a local government, especially persons with disabilities and older persons, and proactively take steps to ensure smart cities are inclusive of all groups.



(5.5) Ensure that local governments actively support programs that guarantee that online learning platforms selected for capacity building and the related technological tools and learning methods used are evaluated on their impact, accessibility, and the audience's learning experience once the training ends.



(5.6) Ensure that organizations of persons with disabilities and older persons, including networks of nursing homes, are engaged in local and national government online training programs to raise skills across geographical, cultural, and economic disparities.



(5.7) The basic respect of all people's legal capacity to make informed choices and the right to supported decision making, even at times of crisis, must be protected. Ensure processes and strategies are in place that acknowledge any existing implicit or embedded systemic bias against vulnerable people including people with learning disabilities, people with psycho-social disabilities, and older persons.

Global Compact Principle #6

Data for Development



(6.1) Ensure that international organizations and governments collaborate to issue guidelines outlining clear standards, processes, and criteria for the safe and transparent collection and use of data disaggregated by disability in line with the OHCHR human rights based approach to data collection and the IASC guidelines².



(6.2) Ensure that local governments clearly publicize and share their standards, processes, and criteria for data collection/measurement/storage to help prevent biased data collection and interpretation and to allow cross-national data comparability along different geographical contexts.



(6.3) Ensure that local governments collect, publicly report, and disseminate open, reliable, timely, and disaggregated data that ensures confidentiality but includes type of disability, age in 5 year increments from 60, and gender on the impact of Covid-19 to allow targeted interventions and evidence-based inclusive governance responses.



(6.4) Ensure that local governments partner with one another and organizations with reliable data to create a common data knowledge base and that disability disaggregated data is collected using participatory and accessible methods.



(6.5) Ensure that both local and national governments protect all persons under the jurisdiction of a local government, including persons with disabilities and older persons, when collecting and using data for technology development through provisions for safety and protection of the right to privacy.



(6.6) Ensure that local governments gather and analyze lessons learned about Covid-19 and other sanitary emergencies, including from real-time monitoring processes where possible, and leverage them to reduce inequalities and all forms of human rights violations against persons with disabilities and older persons. The lessons learned should ultimately aim towards the establishment of a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable society that celebrates and thrives on diversity.

² https://www.who.int/mental_health/emergencies/9781424334445/en/

Annex A



Joint Statement

Local Governments and Persons with Disabilities in Relation to COVID-19

May 05, 2020

1. With the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities accessibility became a human rights principle, adopting a specific norm that obliges States Parties to take pertinent measures to ensure access to persons with disabilities, on equal terms with others, to the physical environment, transport, information and communications, including information and communication systems and technologies, and other services and facilities open to the public or for public use, both in urban and rural areas, so that persons with disabilities can live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life.

2. Universal accessibility is undoubtedly the most mainstreamed legal structure in human rights for the 21st century³. It is based on "universal design"⁴, which is the design of products, environments, programs and

³ 12 COSP, Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary General on Disability and Accessibility, United Nations Headquarters, New York, 2019.

⁴ United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, CRPD 2006, article 2, item number 5.

services that can be used by all persons, as much as possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

3. The 2030 Agenda establishes as a Sustainable Development Goal to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, highlighting the goals related to accessible transport, green areas and accessible public spaces, to “not leave anybody behind ”(goal 11.2 and goal 11.7, respectively).

4. The COVID-19 pandemic and its disproportionately negative effects on persons with disabilities and older persons have also highlighted persistent deficiencies in accessibility in cities and rural settings.

5. Difficulties of accessibility to the physical space of some hospitals and other health centers have been observed, as well as access to health goods and technologies, poor access to information in accessible formats such as sign language, Braille, augmentative and alternative modes, means, and formats of communication; transport without full accessibility, the persistent difficulties in a quarantine situation to find food, medicine, and in some cases water; and general protocols that do not always make persons with disabilities and older persons visible. At the same time, deficiencies show that many persons are still unaware of persons with disabilities and older persons as rights holders with full legal capacity to make their own decisions, with support if necessary, and their right to reasonable accommodation.⁵

6. Many persons with disabilities and older persons live in poverty and marginality, aggravated by the lack of accessibility. The pandemic is currently increasing this multidimensional poverty.

⁵ United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, CRPD 2006, article 2, item number 4.

7. “When the interconnection of multiple barriers is identified can planners begin to steer contemporary cities towards more inclusive urban futures”. “When a city plants the seed of accessibility, public perceptions on the importance of equity and inclusion in that city also take hold.”⁶

8. Local governments and their authorities are in direct contact with the population of their respective jurisdictions, to meet their needs during the COVID 19 emergency and to interact with central governments for the welfare of citizens (neighbors).

9. Consequently, we call on the leadership of local and regional governments to effectively consolidate the universal accessibility of cities and human settlements, as an effective way to fulfill human rights and overcome poverty, counting for this with the Human Rights model recognized in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Strategy of the WHO Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, always taking into account the reality of each local context and the needs and proposals of citizens.

10. In order to comply with the current legal obligation of universal accessibility and for cities and rural environments in the near future after the pandemic, local and regional governments will be effective actors in the implementation of an inclusive and fully participatory response of persons with disabilities and older persons through their representative organizations, without discrimination, eliminating all kinds of prejudices, stereotypes and harmful practices.

⁶ Victor Santiago Pineda: Building the Inclusive City. Governance, Access and the Urban Transformation of Dubai.

11. An inclusive and fully participatory response must consider the formulation of inclusive urban policies, plans, legislation, programs and strategies, capacity building, and the collection of data and statistics for implementation. This implies the allocation of a specific budget and the evaluation and participatory monitoring of organized civil society of persons with disabilities and older persons in compliance with policies, plans, legislation, programs and strategies on universal accessibility.

12. We call on United Cities and Local Governments UCLG, as an organization and global network inspired by the Sustainable Development Goals, and as a voice of local and regional governments for the welfare of citizens, to reinforce the work on universal accessibility as a key to sustainable development, through specific strategies and mechanisms among its partners.

13. The Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities will be an effective alternative for dialogue with UCLG, with cities, with local authorities and professionals, to exchange knowledge and good practices on inclusive urban development, as well as create partnerships for accelerate its implementation and sustainability.

Prof. Maria Soledad Cisternas Reyes

Special Envoy of the United Nations
Secretary General on Disability and
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Sign the Global Compact and Campaign for Inclusive and Accessible Cities

www.Cities4All.org

#TheFutureIsAccessible



The C4All Campaign is coordinated by the WORLD ENABLED as a collaborative global initiative. World Enabled (WE)/ The Victor Pineda Foundation (VPF) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) strategic research and educational organization celebrating nearly 20 years of informing policy and advising global leaders. WE pioneers tools, methods, and knowledge around access. WE's mission is to ensure that accessibility is understood as a critical human imperative.