

CONFERENCE

Urban Communities in the Face of the Climate Crisis

14 May 2024, Bonn, Germany

Background

The world is not on track to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (SDG 11). Every third urban resident in the Global South lives in informal settlements while the number of people living in urban areas highly exposed to the physical impacts of climate change is fast growing. Besides natural growth, rural-urban migration as a livelihood diversification strategy and, already now, climate-induced migration and displacement continue to foster the trend of urbanisation, especially in countries of the Global South. Urban migrants and refugees as well as communities that live in informal settlements are particularly and increasingly at risk of experiencing climate-induced loss and damage. Greater consideration of the voices of vulnerable urban communities in global, national and sub-national climate policy frameworks is critical to enable effective response to the climate crisis in urban contexts.

This year offers a momentum to advance the global ambition on cities and climate resilience with the forthcoming World Urban Forum (November 2024, Egypt), the Bonn Climate Change Conference (June 2024), and COP29 (November 2024, Azerbaijan) where issues of justice, inclusiveness and finance will be high on the agenda. Against this background, this conference, co-hosted by the German Institut of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) and Misereor, the German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation, aims to bring insights from research, governmental and non-governmental organisations on emerging policy issues for implementing the UN urban and climate agendas with a particular focus on empowering urban communities towards building a resilient future.

Acknowledgements:

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Note:

During our events photos and/or videos may be taken, which may be published in various media for the purposes of documentation and PR activities. By participating in the event, you agree to this. You have the right to inform us at any time that you do not want to be photographed or filmed.

Programme

9:30 – 10:00

Arrival of participants and registration

10:00 – 10:15

Opening

Dr. Nicholas Goedeking, Researcher, IDOS (main event moderator)

Welcome note

Prof. Dr. Anna-Katharina Hornidge, Director, IDOS

10:15 – 11:00

Setting the floor:

Global urbanisation trends and climate vulnerability

“The number of people expected to live in urban areas highly exposed to climate change impacts has increased substantially. [...] Globally, the most rapid growth in urban vulnerability and exposure has been in cities and settlements where adaptive capacity is limited, especially in unplanned and informal settlements in low- and middle-income nations [...].” (Dodman et al, 2022)

By 2050, two thirds of the world’s population will live in cities, with 90 per cent of the expected urban growth taking place in Africa and Asia and being driven primarily by low-income population groups. This introductory session brings insights on climate risks and multi-dimensional vulnerabilities in cities with a focus on informal settlements and marginalised communities. Speakers will discuss:

- Which climate-related hazards are cities facing now and in the future?

- What are the underlying exposures and vulnerabilities that are exacerbating climate-related risks faced by communities living in informal settlements?
- Which relevant international urban-climate policy frameworks address the resilience of cities, and what are the challenges and opportunities for their effective implementation at the local level?

Speakers:

David Jacome-Polit, Acting Head Resilient Development, ICLEI

Dr. Saravanan Subramanian, Senior Researcher, IDOS

Anumita Roychowdhury, Executive Director CSE

Moderation:

Kai Klause, Advocacy Officer for Urban Transformation, Misereor

11:00 – 11:10

Short break

11:10 – 11:17

Keynote

The Habitat-Climate Crisis: From Local Responses to International Debate

Maria Silvia Emanuelli, Coordinator of Habitat International Coalition (HIC) – Latin America

11:20 – 12:05

Leave No One Behind: Strengthening resilience with urban communities

“Robust adaptation plans are those developed in inclusive ways. However, few [of them] are being developed through consultation and co-production with diverse and marginalised urban communities. The concerns and capacities of marginalised communities are rarely considered in planning”. (Dodman et al., 2022)

In response to the increasing climate-induced risks, more and more city administrations seek to invest in adaptation. Approaches range from nature-based solutions, disaster risk reduction and social protection to adjusting physical infrastructure. Yet, and especially in informal settlements of the Global South, critical adaptation gaps exist. Underlying barriers to adaptation include financial constraints, power inequalities, and limited technical capacities, among other. This panel explores the crucial role of communities in creating socially just and climate-resilient cities. Key issues to be discussed include:

- What are the challenges and opportunities for pro-poor and inclusive adaptation action in cities?
- In how far are inclusive adaptation plans more robust than top-down approaches: How to design climate action not for, but rather with affected communities? What can we learn from community-based approaches?
- In which ways can development cooperation enable the agency of marginalized urban communities and foster their potential as climate champions?

Speakers:

Samuel Olando, Executive Director Pamoja Trust

Dr. Susan S. Ekoh, Researcher, IDOS

Ruben Werchan, Senior Policy Officer Cities Division, BMZ

Moderation:

Anika Schroeder, Advocacy Officer for Climate Policy, Misereor

12:05 – 13:00

Lunch break

13:00 – 14:00

Loss and damage in cities: Enhancing global finance and governance frameworks

“Urban adaptation gaps exist in all world regions and for all hazard types, although exposure to the limits to adaptation is unevenly distributed. Governance capacity, financial support and the legacy of past urban infrastructure investment constrain how all cities and settlements are able to adapt” (Dodman et al., 2022)

Over the last decade, loss and damage has been formally embedded within the UN climate change regime. The forthcoming years will be pivotal for the development of fit-for-purpose new institutions including the recently established Santiago Network – a technical assistance body, and the Loss and Damage Fund. This session will delve into the following questions:

- What is needed to ensure that vulnerable groups in cities such as informal climate migrants and people living in informal urban settlements will benefit from the recently agreed loss and damage funding arrangements under the UNFCCC regime?
- What are the challenges and opportunities for strengthening technical assistance at the sub-national (city) level?
- What lessons can be learned from the C40 Cities Finance Facility (CFF) on equity, inclusion, and access to climate finance?

Speakers:

Dr. Simone Sandholz, Head of Urban Futures and Sustainability Transformation (FAST), UNU-EHS
Presentation of policy brief: “Addressing and Financing Loss and Damage in Informal Urban Settlements”

Laura Schäfer, Senior Advisor for Climate Risk Management, Germanwatch

Dr. Animesh Kumar, Head of UNDRR Bonn office

Rahel Hermann, Project Manager, C40 Cities Finance Facility (CFF)

Moderation:

Dr. Mariya Aleksandrova, Senior Researcher, IDOS

14:00 – 14:15

Short break

14:15 – 15:30

World Café: Transformative urban climate action

“Global urbanisation offers a time-limited opportunity to work toward widespread and transformational adaptation and climate resilient development.” (Dodman et al., 2022)

As the climate-related risks for cities exacerbate, so do the calls for urban transformational adaptation as a path towards social resilience. In contrast to incremental approaches, such non-linear interventions seek fundamental changes of exclusive, market-led and carbon intense urbanisation patterns that re-produce social vulnerabilities. Intended to bring structural change to urbanisation processes, transformative climate action is characterised by either a large scale or high intensity and creates synergies between adaptation, mitigation and social equity. Questioning institutionalised power relations in the production of the habitat, however, truly transformational adaptation approaches are hard to find in practice and need more attention by science, politics and civil society

Keynote

Dipl. Ing. Dipl. Jur. Gesa Schöneberg, Head of Climate and Sustainability Transformation Unit, Allianz Foundation

Presentation

Dennis Schuepf, Researcher, IDOS

World café

Facilitated discussions of guiding questions for transformative urban climate action in 8 breakout groups

Programme

15:30 – 15:45

Short break

15:45 – 16:20

Strengthening Alliances: Networking Across Sectors

Meet changemakers from academia, government and non-governmental organisations ! This informal networking session invites you to socialise and engage with each other over coffee and snacks.

Which of the World Café questions would you like to discuss in depth? What are the barriers to transformative climate action in cities, and how can they be overcome? What perspectives did you find particularly relevant during the day, who would you like to meet?

16:20 – 16:30

Video Keynote

Outlook for SB60 and COP29: Addressing habitat-related human rights

Joseph Schechla, Coordinator of the Housing and Land Rights Network

16:30 – 16:45

Wrap-up and Closing Remarks

Kathrin Schroeder, Head of the policy department, Misereor