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FIJI WORLD CITIES DAY

The Future we want, the Cities we need

Suva, October 31st 2020



World Cities Day
October 31, 2020
BETTER CITY. BETTER LIFE
Valuing our communities and cities

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

World Cities Day 2020: Valuing Our Communities and Cities

The United Nations General Assembly has designated the 31st of October as World Cities Day to promote the international community's interest in urbanization, push forward cooperation between cities in addressing the challenges of urbanization, and contribute to sustainable urban development around the world. World Cities Day is celebrated in cities across the world every year with a different theme. In 2020, the theme is **Valuing Our Communities and Cities**, acknowledging the role that communities play in fostering sustainable cities, especially in relation to efforts to respond to, and mitigate, COVID-19 challenges.

The impact of COVID-19 has re-shaped urban life around the world, and local communities have played a key role in keeping people safe and maintaining some economic activities.

Valuing our communities encompasses local volunteering, people organizing their own neighbourhoods, as well as social movements that challenge poverty, systemic discrimination, and racism. In informal settlements and slums in particular, communities are making a significant impact, meanwhile households in urban areas are provide a safe environment for work and study.

By being on the frontline of the COVID-19 response, cities and communities have played a major role in proving that collectively we can truly foster sustainable cities for all.

Therefore, it is clear that policy makers and urban managers need to engage communities systematically and strategically in urban planning, implementation and monitoring to co-create the cities of the future.

In the transition to a new sustainable urban normality, local communities must play an extended role in supporting government stimulus packages for employment creation, delivery of essential services, ensuring a green-economic transformation, the provision of adequate shelter and public space and reestablishment of local value chains.



World Cities 2020 in Fiji

1. Overview of the event

On October 31st 2020, UN-Habitat supported the Ministry of Local Government, together with the Suva City Council, and over twenty Government and UN partners to hold the first World Cities Day in Fiji promoting and celebrating liveable, vibrant, healthy, sustainable and inclusive cities.

Held in Suva and organized as a free public Expo, Fiji's initiative focused on inclusion and healthy cities. It provided an opportunity to engage with all segments of society on how urbanization can enable not only economic development but also the growth and celebration of culture and inclusivity.

Partners: Ministry of Local Government, Suva City Council, Fiji National Sports Commission; Fiji Disabled Persons Federation; Ministry of Fisheries; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Forestry; Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation; Ministry of Youth and Sport; Ministry of Agriculture; Ministry of Defense; Ministry of Lands; Ministry of Employment; Ministry of Housing and Community Development; National Fire Authority; Fiji

2. Activities developed

Through a combination of interactive sports activities, art, dialogue sessions, and public awareness information booths, the local team and its partners created spaces for community celebration and provided opportunities to promote sustainable education and dialogue.

In this sense, UN-Habitat organized an interactive mapping exercise to engage the public in dialogue on 'The future we want, the cities we need'. The activity was designed so that people from a variety of different backgrounds, ages, and professions could take part. Participants were asked to provide feedback on topics such as basic service provision, recreational activities, housing, and safety and security, all of which will be used to inform future policy making and programming.

The **interactive mapping exercise**, used as a **feedback wall**, with specific reference points, served as an excellent inclusive tool for engagement with members of the public, as they were able to visualize the places in their city they value and areas where they identified challenges. For example, Damodar was noted as an area that was easily accessible by wheelchair. Alternatively, the seawall was identified as a place where accessibility and safety should be improved through better pathways and lighting.

Additionally, together with the Fiji Disabled Persons Federation and the Fiji National Sports Commission, UN-Habitat participated in the implementation of the **inclusion space**. This part of the event made room for inclusion sports practice to raise awareness of disabilities amongst young children.



Furthermore, several interviews were conducted to better understand the needs of people with disabilities and to open up dialogues on the topic. Thus, questions focused on (1) what would you like to tell the leaders of today and tomorrow about inclusive and accessible cities, and (2) on what are your hopes for the future? This activity successfully allowed local communities and authorities to reflect on how urban inclusivity can improve living standards.

As this year also marks the **75th anniversary of the United Nations**, host partners created a Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Action

Zone for children to take part in various activities to raise awareness of the SDGs. This initiative was aimed at helping local communities to understand how they relate to cities and what they mean to our daily lives. This part of the event was successfully developed through two main activities:

- the **SDGs Action Zone** with a SDGs quiz aimed to raise-awareness and enhance dialogues;
- and the **Children Dreams Space**, designed as a unique space where children could draw their imagined city.

3. Key findings

After discussing specific locations on the Suva City map and to the varied feedback, the participants shared their vision for Fiji's future cities. The common themes that emerged were:

- The need to **improve accessibility to public infrastructures and information** (stadiums, public spaces, inclusive signage, access to information).
- **Improvements to roads through infrastructure repairs and traffic reducing** measures by encouraging alternative forms of transport.
- **Better waste management services** by installing more rubbish bins, providing recycling services and compost bins, and banning Styrofoam containers.
- **An increased investment in public spaces**, such as improving public parks and gardens, playgrounds for children and creating public art areas. There was an emphasis on the need for a greater understanding of **the value of public art** within the Government.
- There is a **discrepancy between the affordability of central housing and that on the periphery**, which has resulted in families being pushed out of the city centre and exacerbates already poor traffic conditions.
- **Accessible housing**, while higher supply in central Suva than further out of the city, **can still be much improved**, a specific focus should be given to improving accessibility within informal settlements, regardless of their proximity to the city centre.
- **Improved safety measures for children, women and members of the LGBTQI+ community was a key recommendation.** Of particular importance to highlight is the statement that one participant made that there are no public spaces within the city where members of the LGBTQI+ community feel safe. A key element that was raised in regards to safety of all citizens was the need for increased street lighting.



4. Lessons learned

Inclusivity and accessibility are a key challenge for Fijian cities. Many participants promoted inclusion by accessibility for children, elder people, people with disabilities and others. Therefore, enhancing advocacy and awareness was pointed out to develop more inclusive cities (developing initiatives through sport and education, taking advantage of digital tools), as well as the improvement of basic infrastructure.

Opportunities for the SDGs:

- **SDG 10 | Target 10.2:**

By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

- **SDG 9 | Target 9.1:**

Develop quality, reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.

- **SDG 11 | Target 11.7:**

By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities and the LGBTQI+ community.

Access to basic services is also an important concern for local communities. Better waste management, access to information and affordable housing appeared as opportunities to improve livelihoods, reduce poverty and inequalities, and promote inclusive and healthier cities.

Opportunities for the SDGs:

- **SDG 11 | Target 11.6:**

By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management.

- **SDG 11 | Target 11.1:**

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

Communities are interested in being more involved in the decision-making process, and participatory approaches might help Fijian cities to enhance a more inclusive and sustainable urban development. Therefore, the possibility to give feedback to the government was a recurrent topic.

Opportunities for the SDGs:

- **SDG 11 | 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.

Finally, cities' inhabitants are sensitive to the contribution of art and heritage to develop inclusive and sustainable cities. As the need for an increased number of public spaces was emphasised, participants recommended integrating art into public spaces development to encourage creativity, and develop knowledge and an appreciation of cultural diversity.

Opportunities for the SDGs:

- **SDG 4 | Target 4.7:**

By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.



The inclusion space in action © UN-Habitat Fiji



Valuing our communities and cities

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