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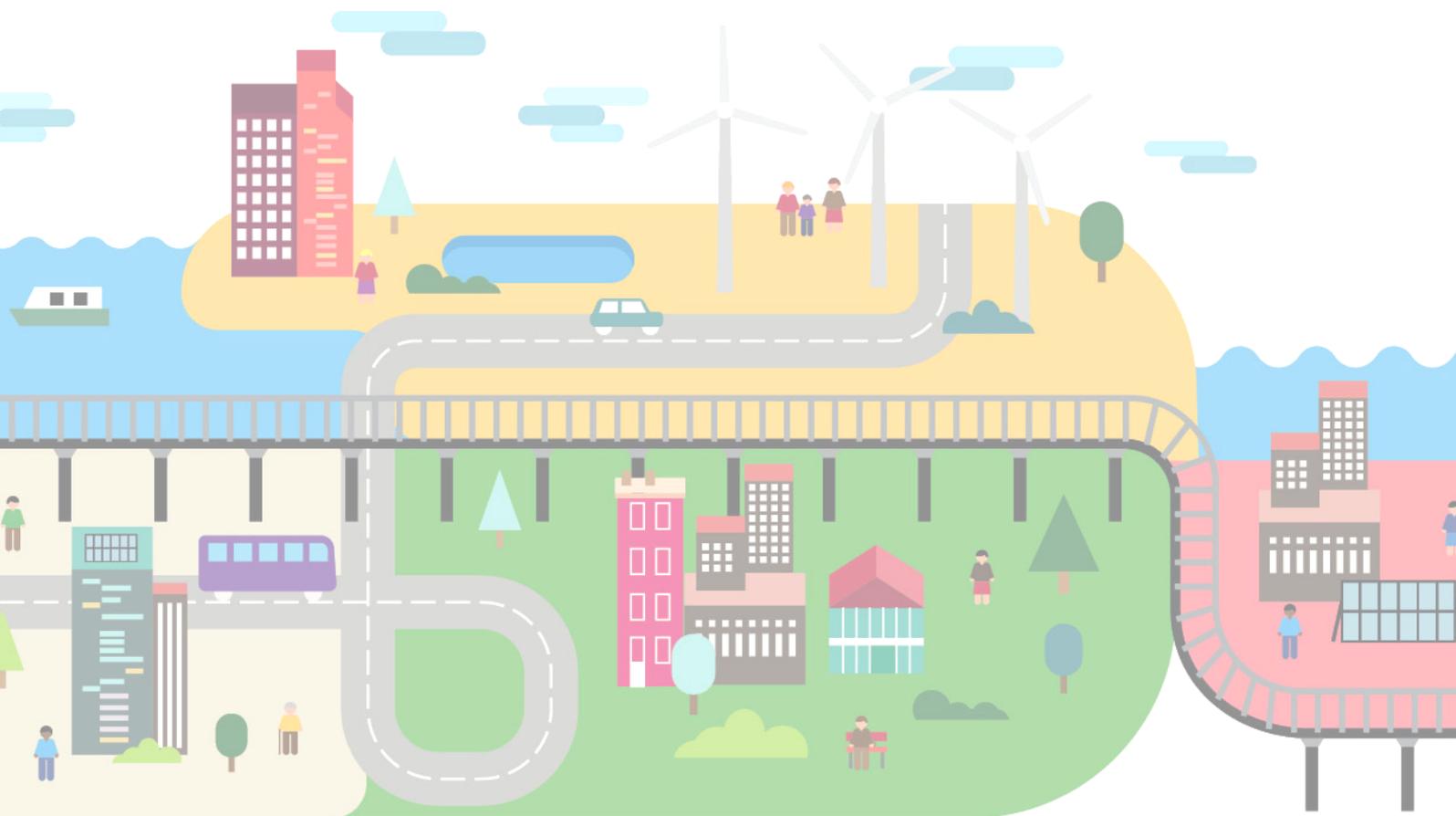
International Urban Cooperation programme

Summary of Local Governance Structures:
focus on IUC countries

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ABBREVIATIONS

CAA	Constitutional Amendment Act (India)
FYP	Five-Year Plan (China)
GCoM	Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy
ICLEI	ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability
IUC	International Urban Cooperation programme of the EU
NAPCC	National Action Plan on Climate Change (India)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ULBs	Urban Local Bodies (India)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Local governments from across the world are sharing knowledge and collaborating to identify successful solutions that foster sustainable urban development in their locales. However, governance structures in different countries can vary. These are defined by law, outlined either in the constitution or in other legislation. Depending on these structures, local governments in different parts of the world may have vastly different mandates. To ensure that knowledge-sharing is productive and focused, cities must therefore understand the mandates of their global peers, and which areas are best suited for collaboration.

Typically, countries have at least two tiers or levels of government, though three or more also possible, especially in federal systems where a subnational state government and local government(s) is defined. These structures typically delineate the official mandates, but also the power and responsibilities of each level of government in the country. However, these powers and responsibilities are not necessarily defined clearly enough, especially as it relates to emerging topics relevant to urbanization, sustainable urban development and climate change.

This document provides a brief overview on local level governance structures, also the level of urbanization and informal settlements prevalent in North America (Canada and the USA); Asia (China, India and Japan); as well as Latin America. The latter is a region where a relative cohesive governance approach exists, and as such is addressed as a region only.

The focus of the publication is on governance structures and typical mandates (or lack thereof) of the local government level in these countries. It is intended to inform opportunities for the International Urban Cooperation (IUC) programme, addressing city-level exchange and cooperation beyond borders, addressing specific sectors and topics of interest to local governments.

Considering the diversity of possible mandates, the underlying aim of peer exchange is to connect cities on themes or sectors where they have a common mandate or interest, with a view to address and exchange on solutions to existing challenges and problems.

This enhanced understanding is supplemented by a set of basic recommendations for consideration in defining sustainable approaches to city-level challenges. Opportunities are identified such as accessing the wide range of existing networks (city and/or thematic) that can help guide and connect matching cities and regions in future City-to-City cooperation on sustainable urban development.



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1. INTRODUCTION

This document provides a basic overview of city-level (local) governance structures in countries addressed by the International Urban Cooperation (IUC) programme, which aims to enable cities and regions to link up and share solutions to common problems. This overview is supplemented by a set of basic recommendations for consideration in defining future City-to-City cooperation on sustainable urban development.

It is important to understand the in-country level of urbanization and extent of informal settlements (which are in or close to cities) when addressing the urban context, as the scale of these have a direct impact on the role of the local government. It not only impacts issues such as urban planning and access to basic services, but also raises questions regarding obligatory functions versus discretionary functions.

Governance systems define the necessary competences - not only outlining the mandates of local governments, but also roles and responsibilities they take on. These differ from country to country. Yet, mandates are not necessarily in place to deal with all local needs and interests. The discretionary functions and interests of local governments are a strong driving force. These can include improving air quality, reducing poverty, or sustainable urban development and exploring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These were developed for national governments, but many SDGs are directly relevant to the local community level - and, as such, of interest to local governments.

Over the course of its lifetime (2017-2020) the IUC program has successfully matched cities and local governments with their peers on relevant themes. However, the conversation between peers has also shown substantial differences on local mandates, roles and responsibilities. This has led to some challenges in operationalising the planned cooperation. To pre-empt such challenges identified in the IUC programme, a set of easy-to-follow recommendations are outlined to guide matching approaches and having fruitful and constructive peer exchanges.



Figure 1: Topics addressed by cities via the IUC programme



2. LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN FOCUS BY REGION

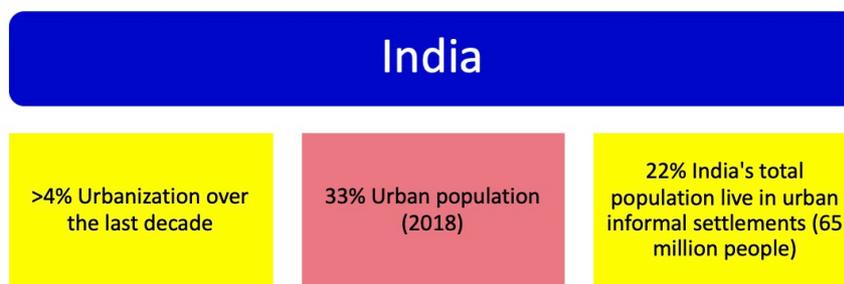
Below, per region and addressing some countries, the level of urbanization and informal settlements, as well as the governance structures in-country are briefly outlined, zooming in on the local government's typical mandates, roles and responsibilities, as well as interests.

This summary shows a clear link between global, national and local issues, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and climate action.

1.1 Asia

1.1.1 India

1.1.1.1 Introduction: urbanization and informal settlements



Over the last decade, urbanization in India has expanded by approximately 4 percent, with people migrating to urban areas from agricultural areas, seeking employment in the growing service sector such as telecommunications and ITs. By 2018, the proportion of the Indian urban population stood around 33% (Plecher, 2020). Around 65 million individuals, or 22 percent, of India's total population, live in urban informal settlements. (Udaya Shankar & Rinju, 2020).

One of the expected challenges in the coming decade, is that India is likely to experience substantial repetitive waves of climate refugees from poor neighbouring countries vulnerable to climate change, such as Nepal and Bangladesh (National Intelligence Council, 2009). This will impact on access to food, water and shelter, as well as provision of basic services.

3.1.1.2 Overview of governance structures

India is a federal republic with three-tiers of government: the central, state and local levels. Local governments are referred to as jurisdictions below the level of the subnational state government. The constitutional amendments, the 73rd and the 74th, gave recognition and protection to local governments, and, in addition, each state has its own local government legislation. (Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2018)

Local governments in India are further divided into two very distinct forms: urban localities and rural localities. The 73rd amendment to the constitution formalized the powers of the rural localities (The Constitution of India 73rd Amendment Act, 1992). In the 74th amendment to the constitution, Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) derive their powers from the state governments (The Constitution of India 74th Amendment Act, 1992).

The Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) are classified into three kinds of local bodies:

- Municipal corporations (mahanagar palikas) for zones with a population of more than one million
- Municipal councils/municipalities (nagar palikas) for zones without a million people
- City/town councils (nagar panchayats) for zones progressing from rural to urban.

2.1.1.3 Typical roles and responsibilities of Local Government

Urban development policies are part of India's state governments, which then assign duties to local authorities. The roles and responsibilities of municipal bodies of India are delegated to them by the state governments under the municipal legislation. The municipal acts in India provide for functions, powers and responsibilities to be carried out by the municipalities (Constitution of India 74th Amendment Act, 1992).

Municipal governments were given significant powers in the health and education sectors in 1992. However, the 74 Constitution Amendment Act does not specify any organizational structure for municipal administration in India.



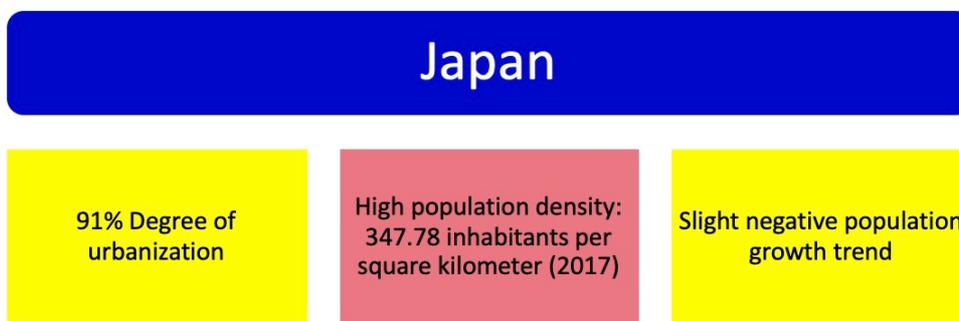
Figure 2: List of responsibilities of Indian ULBs according to the 74 Constitutional Amendment Act (1992)

In addition to the traditional and obligatory functions, municipalities also carry out discretionary functions on economic development and social justice, urban poverty alleviation programs and promotion of cultural, educational and aesthetic aspects. In addition, the sectoral departments of the state government often assign unilaterally, and on an agency basis, various functions such as sustainable urban development, family planning, nutrition and slum improvement, disease and epidemic control, etc. (Fahim, Mayraj, 2009).



2.1.2 Japan

2.1.2.1 Introduction: urbanization and informal settlements



In the past decade, Japan's degree of urbanization has levelled off at around 91 percent. It also has a high population density, with 347.78 inhabitants per square kilometre (2017) and a slight negative population growth trend. ([Statista](#), accessed 2020).

Although Japan currently has strong commitments to fight climate change in the near future, cities still find it difficult to communicate effectively with international partners; moreover, the country experiences difficulties in advancing effective multi-level dialogues with national stakeholders (IUC Steering Committee Updates, 2020)

2.1.2.2 Overview of governance structures

The government of Japan is a constitutional monarchy and has a unitary system of government where local jurisdictions largely depend on national government both administratively and financially. Under the local autonomy system, Japan is divided into 47 prefectures, and each prefecture is divided into municipalities.

Japan is divided into forty-seven administrative divisions: one metropolitan district (to--Tokyo), two urban prefectures (fu--Kyoto and Osaka), forty-three rural prefectures (ken), and one district (do --Hokkaido). Large cities are subdivided into wards (ku), and further split into towns, or precincts (machi or cho), or subdistricts (shicho) and counties (gun). Cities (shi) are self-governing units administered independently of the larger jurisdictions within which they are located. In order to attain shi status, a jurisdiction must have at least 30,000 inhabitants, 60 percent of whom are engaged in urban occupations. The term "30 percent autonomy" is frequently used to describe local government because that amount of revenues is derived from local taxation (<http://countrystudies.us/japan/116.htm>, accessed on 23 June 2020).

2.1.2.3 Typical roles and responsibilities of Local Government

All local governments are required by law to deal with general affairs, finance, welfare, health, and labour. Depending on the local context, other topics include agriculture, fisheries, forestry, commerce, and industry.

2.1.3 People's Republic of China (PRC)

2.1.3.1 Introduction: urbanization and informal settlements



China is experiencing dramatic urbanization, with an increase in urban population over the last decade from about 50 percent to about 78 percent, and growing. Relevant in this context of growth is a wide range of challenges that are impacting on urban areas, such as climate change, water and energy shortages, (air and other) pollution, and aging infrastructure (National Academy of Sciences, 2020). This means the urban context is a critical space for action.

Informal settlements in China are referred to as “urban villages”. These were originally rural villages that were affected and even encroached by urban development as cities expanded, due to rapid urbanization (Wu, F. and Wang, Z. 2017. [The sustainable regeneration of Chinese informal settlements](#)). Official statistics on the percentage of informal settlements is not available. However, as an example Shenzhen, by 2017 had 1,800 urban villages.

2.1.3.2 Overview of governance structures

China's state governance model means there are overlaps between the Party and state organs in organizational arrangements. From the constitutional perspective, the Party and the state are clearly distinguishable. Decentralized governance between central and local governments addresses the economic development model, with political power such as decision-making relatively concentrated on the secretary of the local Party committee. (Bai, Z. and Liu, J. 2020; and Zhili Bai and Juan Liu, [China's governance model and system in transition](#), 2020).

In addition to the central level of government, types of government structures at the subnational level address administration functions, and include provinces, provincial level municipalities (cities / prefectures) and autonomous regions, as well as counties (districts).

2.1.3.3 Typical roles and responsibilities of Local Government

Local governments and relevant departments follow the guidance of President Xi Jinping's “Thought on ecological civilization”, implementing the arrangements and requirements of the National Conference on Ecological and Environmental Protection, as well as implementing the “13th Five-Year Plan”(FYP) tasks of greenhouse gas (GHG) emission control, and making progress in addressing climate change. Further, this cooperation will be defined on the basis of principles of common but differentiated responsibilities, equity, and respective capabilities, and implement the deployment decided on the meetings of the National Leading Group for Addressing Climate Change and Energy Conservation and Emission Reduction, to ensure the fulfillment of the 13th FYP targets for addressing climate change. (Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the People's



Republic of China. 2019. China's Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change - <http://english.mee.gov.cn/>).

Beijing, Tianjin, Jiangsu, Zhejiang and other cities have implemented green building standards in new buildings in urban areas. The three-year action to improve the quality and efficiency of urban sewage treatment was launched, and, by the end of 2018, a total of 4,332 sewage treatment plants were built in cities and counties nationwide, with a sewage treatment capacity of 195 million cubic meters per day (Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China. 2019. China's Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change).

Selected pilot provinces and municipalities in China are implementing various tasks and requirements put forward by the national government to promote low-carbon development. Some pilot projects explored the establishment of carbon emission control institutions, carbon emission assessments for major projects, and low-carbon product standard labeling and certification, with a number of supporting policies promulgated. (Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China. 2019. China's Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change - paper, no link).

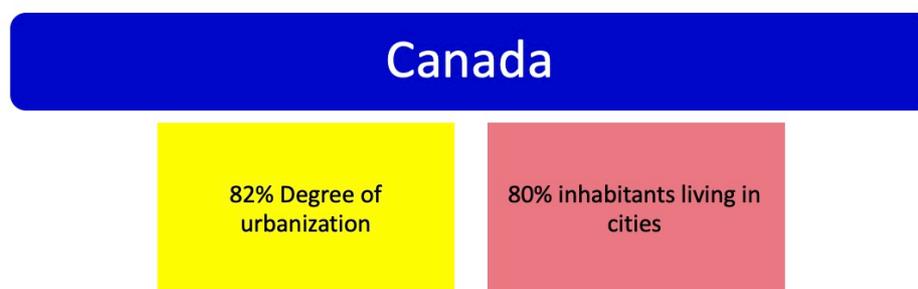
The Ministry of Finance, working with relevant departments, supported local governments to carry out clean heating and elimination of coal-fired boilers through funds for air pollution prevention and control, so as to promote the control of scattered coal and reduce pollution emissions. (Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China. 2019. China's Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change).

The national plan on climate change has the overall objective of mitigation and adaptation, which impacts China's master development plan - the so called five year plan (FYP). Accordingly, at the province and city level, each level develops its FYP plan to echo and align with the national plan and objectives. Further, they will also undertake tasks defined by the national government. During this top-down process, national government also respects the different development status and capacity of regions and cities. For example in the China Low Carbon City Initiative (currently 100+ pilot cities) they select cities across the whole country and encouraged them to set up targets - particularly for mitigation or emission peaking ([Rocky Mountain Institute, 2017](#)).

2.2 North America

2.2.1 Canada

2.2.1.1 Introduction: urbanization and informal settlements



The level of urbanization in Canada is reaching 82%, with somewhat over 80% of the national population living in cities ([Statista, 2020](#)).

2.2.1.2 Overview of governance structures

Canada is the biggest country in North America and has a federal government system with the following levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal (local) governments.

The second tier or level are provinces and territories. Provinces have further subnational governments, with different terms used which vary from county to municipal district, or regional municipality (municipal governments) - each with its own differentiated mandates. There is a certain level of decentralization from the federal government to provinces, with the provincial level holding authority over the municipalities.

The lower tier of subdivisions are cities, towns, villages and townships. In Canada there are approximately 3,700 municipal governments ([Service Canada](#)).

2.2.1.3 Typical roles and responsibilities of Local Government

Municipal works departments are the main responsible operators of water works, including sanitation and distribution. A mixed approach is typical: in some cases private firms deal with the water works, or municipal agencies engage in collaboration with the provincial government. Local Water Management in Canada Mark S. Winfield, Ph.D. Director, Environmental Governance Pembina Institute for Appropriate Development.

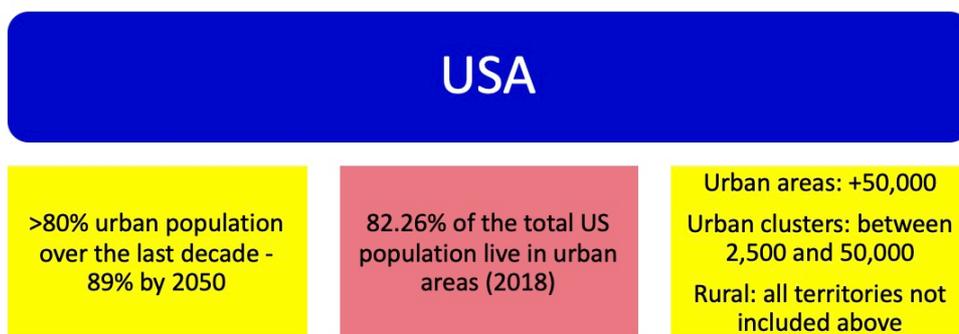
The responsibility for managing and reducing waste in Canada is shared among federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments. In general terms, municipal governments manage the collection, recycling, composting, and disposal of household waste, while provincial and territorial authorities establish waste reduction policies and programs, approve and monitor waste management facilities and operations ([Canada.ca](#)).

Municipalities such as those in Ontario can appoint a Building Code Commission which works with the building sector Building Code Act, 1992 S.O. 1992, CHAPTER 23. This can also be replicated in other municipalities with more or less the same attributions but with a differentiated relationship with the Province level, depending on local regulations.

Developing and implementing a climate strategy is aligned between local government and Province level, with great autonomy for each level.

2.2.2 USA

2.2.2.1 Introduction: urbanization and informal settlements





In the United States, the urban proportion of the population has grown to over 80 percent in the last decade, forecasted to reach about 89 percent by 2050 (National Academy of Sciences, 2020).

In 2018, about 82.26 percent of the total population in the United States lived in cities and urban areas (statista, 2020).

The U.S. census bureau defines Urbanized Areas as those of 50,000 or more people; Urban Clusters of at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people. "Rural" encompasses all population, housing, and territory not included within an urban area. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020)

2.2.2.2 Overview of governance structures

The U.S. has 573 sovereign tribal nations, who have a formal nation-to-nation relationship with the U.S. federal government. The federal system is also composed of 50 states (4 of which refer to themselves as a Commonwealth rather than a State), a federal district, five major self-governing territories and several islands.

Local government in the United States refers to governmental jurisdictions below the level of the subnational State. All the states and territories are further divided into counties and municipalities. Counties consist of municipalities, and in some cases a city / county operates as a combined political subdivision and offers the services of both.

A municipality has different types of jurisdictions, and is relevant to cities, towns, boroughs and villages. The nature, types, and authority of these municipalities vary from state to state. A county is run by elected commissioners, supervisors, county board or council members, or executives.

Recorded from the 2012 census, there are 19,500 municipal governments and approximately 16,500 township governments in the United States. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Most of the municipal governments, on governing models, operate on either a mayor-council system or a council-manager system.

- *Council-Manager system*: As per surveys by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), this is the most common form of government for municipalities in the USA, and popular in cities with populations over 10,000, mainly in the Southeast and Pacific coast areas. Some examples are Phoenix, Arizona; Topeka, Kansas; San Antonio, Texas, and Rockville, Maryland. The city council oversees the general administration, makes policy, sets budget, while it also appoints a professional city manager to carry out day-to-day administrative operations (National League of Cities, 2020).
- *Mayor-Council system*: According to ICMA this is the second most common form of government and is implemented in 34% of cities. Mostly used in older, larger cities, or in very small cities, this is the most popular system in the Mid-Atlantic and Midwest. Cities with variations in the mayor-council form of government are New York, New York; Houston, Texas; Salt Lake City, Utah, and Minneapolis, Minnesota. The mayor is elected separately from the council, and may have significant administrative and budgetary authority, depending on the municipal charter (National League of Cities, 2020).

2.2.2.3 Typical roles and responsibilities of Local Government

Municipal governments are responsible for providing clean water as well as sewage and garbage disposal. They must maintain city facilities, such as parks, streetlights, and stadiums. In

addition, they address zoning and building regulations, promote the city's economic development, and provide law enforcement, public transportation, and fire protection.

Municipal governments typically rely on property tax revenue, user fees from waste collection and the provision of water and sewer services, as well as a portion of sales tax receipts and taxes on business (OERservices – American Government).

Local governments are classified as special districts, or political subdivisions of the state. Local governments include counties, municipalities (cities and towns), school districts, and other types of government entities such as "authorities" and "special districts." In some states, the law limits the types of services that county governments can provide to residents. Districts are created to fill the gaps that may exist in the services counties provide and the services the residents may desire. The majority of districts draw their boundaries in unincorporated county land, but residents of a municipality may be included in one or more districts.

Counties often for high-level planning functions including development; to maintain public infrastructure including public transportation, public schools, public housing, and public health operations. Counties are generally responsible for property tax assessments and collections. Counties also provide law enforcement and judicial functions. They are the form of government responsible for the management of rural areas that are not located within a municipal boundary, referred to as unincorporated areas.

Many states have adopted "home rule" provisions that confer greater authority to their local governments. Home rule is a delegation of power from the state to its sub-units of governments (including counties, municipalities, towns or townships or villages). That power is limited to specific areas, including taxing authority and buildings codes in many cases. Home rule creates local autonomy and greater flexibility for local governments without state interference ([National League of Cities](#)).

A regional council (RC) or council of governments (COG), known sometimes as a regional planning commissions, regional commissions, or planning districts – is a multi-service entity with state- and locally-defined boundaries that delivers a variety of federal, state, and local programs while carrying out its function as a planning organization, technical assistance provider, and "visionary" to its member local governments. As such, COGs and RCs are accountable to local units of government and effective partners for state and federal governments ([National Association of Regional Councils](#)).

Metropolitan Planning Organizations are created by federal law to provide local elected officials' input into the planning and implementation of federal transportation funds to metropolitan areas with populations of greater than 50,000 ([National Association of Regional Councils](#)).

The federal government regulates air and water quality standards in partnership with the state government. When a region's air quality or water quality falls below federal (or more rigorous state) standards, the state government may establish through statute or governor's executive order, a regional air or water quality commission to address this deficiency.

Local government mandates can vary widely by state. For example, in a home-rule state, such as Colorado, only local governments can set building energy codes, whereas in North Carolina, local governments cannot set a building energy code, and instead must comply with the state code, if any.

Some states allow for two or more public agencies to create a third independent agency through a joint powers agreement. In general, these Joint Powers Agencies (JPAs), are created in



order for the founding public agencies to jointly share a common power, implement a program, build new facilities, or deliver a service.

2.3 Latin America

2.3.1 Introduction: urbanization and informal settlements



Latin America region comprises 20 countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guatemala, Haití, Honduras, México, Nicaragua, Panamá, Paraguay, Perú, República Dominicana, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela).

By 2017 Lat Am was the most urbanized region in the world with 85% of its population (604 million citizens) living in urban areas (Nickson, 2018).

Currently over 100 million people live in slums or favelas; this is almost 1/5th of the population (Teixeira, et al., 2020). These favelas are located on the outskirts of cities, with people occupying vacant land. Across the region the share of the urban population living in slums is between 10 to 40+ percent, with Bolivia the highest percentage at 43.5% ([Our World in Data](#), 2014 statistics, accessed on 23 June 2020).

2.3.2 Overview of governance structures

The typical governance framework for countries in this region is heavily centralized with minimal differences in the political division of levels (national, subnational including local). Yet there is also diversity in the region, with country legislation varying, also the competences for local governments. There are many variations, with the second level typically referred to as province, state, department or region - each with its own mandates. Argentina for example is divided into 23 provinces and an autonomous city, whereas Brazil has 26 states and one federal district, while Colombia has 32 departments and a capital district. Mostly the same name in different countries does not imply the same political and administrative role (OECD. 2020. Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2020).

The demand for more local political autonomy from national governments has increased, exponentially seeking to improve efficiency in service delivery and closer coordination among stakeholders at city level.

2.3.3 Typical Roles & Responsibilities of Local Government

Countries like Ecuador, Bolivia and Chile have strengthened their subnational governments through extended mandates and fiscal transfers. The role of local governments has grown to a more prominent role in both economical and sustainable development processes (Nickson, A. (1995) *Local Government in Latin America*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.). Mandates for local governments in Lat Am vary from country to country. While there is a core group of mandates which is repeated as basic such as land use; waste management and water, differences depend on the access to financial resources and size of the city/town.

In Lat Am mandates on waste management fall on municipalities as the waste generation in the region corresponds to an average of 1 Kg person/day which is expected to increase 25% by 2050; regular collaboration with state level governments or neighboring cities is crucial. Moreover, countries in the region have commonly weak institutional performance due to overlapping mandates, norms and policies which grant different competences within the government reducing effectiveness and application of environmental strategies and regulations (UN Environment, 2018). Water related mandates are generally a responsibility of local governments; particularly in distribution, sanitation and demand. The main mandates at local level tackle access to water and sanitation while protection of water sources and streams are usually assigned to states and provinces in collaboration with the secretary of water or with the designated ministry at the national level. Some apply a decentralized approach at municipal level. It encourages the use of private sector, novel institutional models and PPP for both water distribution and sanitation. Two best practice examples are the municipal water companies in Bogotá, Medellín and Cali and the PPPs in Cartagena and Barranquilla (BID, 2015). Other cases like Ecuador also replicates this model on a more limited scale as is just applied in big cities like Guayaquil and Quito.

For buildings specifically, national regulations are fully integrated into municipal regulations, which further enhance these based on the geographical and weather specificities; particularly in regards to energy efficiency included in the Municipal Climate Action Plans (Erba, 2013).

The decentralization of Climate Governance is directly linked to political centralization as affects policy development in the immediate government levels (including states and local governments); beneficial outcomes can be measured through decentralization; particularly at environmental and financial aspects as local costs; preferences and needs can be taken into account due to first-hand experience and high quality data.

One issue across many cities in the region is unplanned growth, which in turn is connected also to environmental and social issues. This impacts the role of municipalities regarding service provision, especially concerning waste. The spread of informal settlements often make it very difficult for municipalities to provide this service - resulting in open dumpsites, leakages of waste leachates which pollutes the environment. These settlements are also highly vulnerable (due to location and density) to disasters (ICLEI, 2020 - GPSC Sustainable Development Assessment Summary Report).



3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the wide range of opportunities for local action as it relates to sustainable urban development and achieving a host of co-benefits, having a robust understanding of the governance structures. In particular the mandates or lack thereof are an important starting point for any city-to-city cooperation, as it allows to map and then more effectively assess themes and sectors for cooperation. The interests of local governments are likely to be broader than the mandates, especially in an evolving urban context and as new trends and priorities emerge.

Considering the connection and exchange between local governments across country boundaries, multicultural communication combined with vastly different contexts can be quite challenging. Having a similar starting point and common interests can be helpful to initiate the conversation. Below, some recommendations are made with a view to support appropriate matching of local governments and cities across the world.

Exploring opportunities:

- **Define aims and expected outcomes:** Having an overview of what your local government wants to do and achieve will inform the starting point, in addition to being clear on the local mandate. This is ideally co-defined with local partners, including all relevant municipal departments and local stakeholders, to identify needs, gaps and opportunities. This can help gain critical mass locally, while guiding the content for a peer-to-peer exchange program - whether in-country, or across borders and continents.
- **Understand at what stage or phase you are:** Local governments engage in a process of implementing their mandates, roles and responsibilities in their own operations and at community-scale. They may be advanced or just starting, and the level of (necessary) inhouse knowledge and expertise may vary substantially. For example, looking at the process when dealing with nature-based solutions, the [CitiesWithNature Platform](#) follows a step-by-step approach, making it easy to understand where in the process a city is. This can inform expectations for learning and sharing, helping to develop a tailor-made approach to benefit all parties.
- **The value of networks and platforms to enhance city-to-city cooperation:** Networks and platforms act as access points - for a group (actor type and/or geographical range) or a topic - making available relevant information, knowledge and opportunities. This can enhance the value of discourse and learning, e.g the 100% Renewables Cities & Regions Network (as part of the [Global 100% RE Platform](#)), [Urban Transitions Alliance](#) which explore the sustainable energy transition.
- **Intent to replicate and contextualize good practice - local, national, regional and global:** For consideration as replicable good practice also for sustainable urban development and multilevel governance, the newly released publication [Enhancing Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\) through urban climate action](#) (UN-Habitat, 2020) UN-Habitat. 2020. [Enhancing Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\) through urban climate action](#) explores how to have a more integrated approach from development to implementation across different levels of governments. Each level of government can take these recommendations and apply it to its own context.

Overcoming challenges:

- **Terminology may vary but general principles apply:** Although terminology may differ, a set of typical principles or generic elements can be used to structure peer exchanges. When combined with an openness to finding commonalities, this can help orient discussions. , are enhanced by

available guidance and tools, and even offer technical support for local governments, are relevant to most cities and urban areas. Typical actions address local biodiversity, green / blue infrastructure, and access to financing for action (all of which are context specific). As local governments typically address the process (“how to”) - points of relevance can be identified to outline the commonalities and uniquenesses to inform the dialogues and even explore innovation.

- **Looking beyond differences to find similarities:** Even where there are few cultural and language differences, one can find similarities when addressing processes, interests and objectives. The local context needs localised solutions that are context specific, but finding similarities or going beyond this to identify innovative approaches, can help to shape the exchange leading to an enhanced level of understanding and bi-directional learning.
- **Monitoring global trends and local statistics:** By understanding the evolution of global trends, as well as the ebb and flow of trending themes and their relevance to the local community level, one can anticipate the emerging interests of local governments. Digitalisation and the role of local governments in dealing with emergency situations like COVID-19 pandemic, illustrate this well. Leading and innovating cities are keen to explore and test cutting edge options together.



4. CONCLUSIONS

Tracking sustainable urban development from planning to action and dealing with a wide range of sectors and themes, is relevant for local governments, not only to understand the local impact but also to reprioritize as needed. Capacities and needs (considering available municipal staff and the necessary skill sets) of local governments vary from country to country, yet it is clear that the local needs are increasing. This becomes visible in the increasing breadth and depth of local government mandates, as decentralization evolves with the enhanced understanding of the subsidiarity principle. The challenges ahead - in some cases already visible now - will be to create and maintain an equilibrium between what is needed and how to deal with this at community level, and then how to find adequate resources to enable the defined roles.

The added value of using the SDGs to structure the local approach and set goals, can also help inform national government on subnational progress, also as it relates to countries as signatories of major international agreements on urban development and climate change, such as the Urban Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Figure 3: United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Source: United Nations, 2019)

It is interesting to observe that many local governments have clearly signalled the intent to address sustainable urban development and climate change, even where they do not have a clearly defined legal mandate. Responsibility and accountability to the community they administer is a strong driving force, with local leadership visible among politicians and technical municipal managers. Such developments can inform peer exchanges between local governments, addressing key target groups and sub-groups within them, also as it relates to innovation in decentralization and a regular review of mandates between levels of governments to ensure the appropriate level of government has the mandate (principle of subsidiarity).

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6. APPENDIX

A1. Appendix A1 - Typical Mandates (M) and Interests (I) of Local Governments in IUC targeted countries

Sector	Themes	China	Japan	India	Canada	USA	Latin America
Energy		x (M)		x (I)	x (I)	x (M)	
	Energy Transition	x (I)			x (I)		
Buildings		x (M)			x (M)	x (M)	
	Housing	x (M)		x (M)	x (M)		
Transport					x (M)		
	Urban Mobility	x (M)		x (I)	x (M)	x (M)	
Urban Planning		x (M)	x (M)	x (M)	x (M)	x (M)	x (M)
	Sustainable Land Use				x (M)		
Waste		x (M)		x (M)	x (M)	x (M)	x (M)
Water		x (M)		x (M)	x (M)	x (M)	x (M)
	Public Procurement	x	x (M)	x (M)	x (M)	x (M)	
	Air Quality	x	x (I)		x (I)	x (M)	
	Climate Change Mitigation	x	x (I)	x (I)	x (I)	x (I)	x (I)
	Climate Change Adaptation & Resilience	x (M)			x (I)		x(M)
	Culture / Cultural Heritage	x (M)		x (I)	x (I)	x (I)	
	Digital Transformation	x (M)			x (I)		
	Circular Economy	x (M)			x (I)		
	Jobs & Skills / Local Economy		x (M)	x (I)	x (M)	x (I)	



	Urban Poverty / Welfare	x (M)	x (M)	x (I)	x (M)		
	Migrants & Refugees / Inclusion				x (I)		
	Security in Public Spaces	x (M)	x (M)	x (M)	x (M)	x(M)	
	Health	x (M)	X (M)	x (M)	x (I)		
	Education	x (M)		x (M)			