



DIALOGUE 3 WUF 7 CONCEPT NOTE

BASIC SERVICES: LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR EQUITABLE CITIES

Objectives of the Dialogue

The dialogue seeks to raise collective knowledge on the role of business or privately owned companies operating nationally or regionally for sustainable and equitable urban basic services for all. This high profile event will debate the “Urban Equity in Development – Cities for Life” theme through an inclusive open debate hearing the voices from different regions and different fields of occupation.

A high level panel of speakers with plentiful experience of the private sector’s role in delivering urban basic services will outline their experiences and opinions, while simultaneously interacting with the audience.

Introduction of the topic

Urbanisation has the potential to be an engine of economic and social development and the provision of urban basic services is essential to achieve sustainable and equitable urban growth. Unplanned city expansion however presents many challenges. Within the urban space, slums are the face of poverty and urban inequality; they continue to increase in most developing countries and reinforce inequality, particularly in access to basic services. Over 780 million people still do not have access to improved sources of drinking water, while 2.5 billion lack access to improved sanitation facilities. Nearly one in five people around the world do not have access to modern energy services. Poor residents often do not have access to motorized transit services, in Africa for instance this affects on average 80% of the population. In today’s economy, this is inequitable - a major barrier to eradicating poverty.

The ‘**Cities for Life**’ concept is made viable through an open construction of citizenship, community engagement, ethics and values, participatory democracy, co-responsibility and solidarity. Each actor contributes to solidarity and contributes to the social construction of the habitat and an inclusive approach to economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects. Bringing urban equity into the centre of development means that public goods and basic services should be accessible to everyone, creating equal opportunities according to different needs.

Local businesses can drive innovation, improve governance, raise living standards, and provide opportunities to millions of people. Local enterprises cannot deliver projects alone; they can support public-private partnerships by partnering with the government in capacity-building and by producing innovative ideas for project identification and preparation. Also by investing in education and vocational training for

youth, particularly those who are disadvantaged and giving women access to the same opportunities as men, local businesses can significantly contribute to greater equality.

Linkages with Post-2015 Development Agenda and Habitat III

In the Post-2015 discussion, among the proposed UN-Habitat Sustainable Development Goals is to halve by 2030 the average time and expenditure of urban dwellers on travel within urban areas, double the proportion with access to safe, affordable public transport and safe, attractive facilities for walking and bicycling, halve the number of traffic accidents resulting in death or serious injuries and halve the number of annual premature deaths from exposure to vehicle-source air pollution; to increase by 30% the share of renewable energy sources in cities, increase by 40% the share of municipal waste that is recycled, ensure sustainable energy access for all and improve energy efficiency in all public buildings by 50% and all residential buildings by 20%; to achieve universal and equitable access to safe drinking water and halve the proportion of untreated waste water and unmanaged solid waste in cities.

The MDGs remained silent regarding inequalities in access to urban basic services – the Post-2015 needs to include these. The dialogue will consider that progress should be measured not only in terms of the numbers of people using the services but also in terms of reducing inequalities. This requires faster rates of progress in disadvantaged groups.

The proposed dialogue contributes to the aims of **Habitat III** as it analyses the role of local businesses for equitable cities to eventually put in place a new urban development agenda capable of responding to the new urban challenges and opportunities; and finding ways of strengthening the institutional framework for sustainable urban development.

Key interrogatives

The disparities in basic services outlined in the introduction are inequitable and are condemning millions of people to poverty. The disparities undermine economic growth, environmental sustainability and often lies at the basis of conflict and insecurity.

This lack of equality in urban basic services translates into billions of dollars of untapped business opportunities to help deliver solutions that spread the benefits of development more evenly.

One challenge is to devise innovative ways to harness pioneering technology, networks and problem-solving skills of the private sector to strive for adequate and accountable basic service delivery for all.

- Which policy frameworks encourage such practices?
- How can this be done in a competitive business manner, without replacing or undermining the role of the primary duty-bearer, the government?

Investment in progress towards access to basic services for all is key. Most developing countries are not investing enough, which is naturally hindering their growth and creates more future needs.

- Where will the required money come from?
- Is there a role for local businesses alongside governments and international investors?
- What are the challenges and opportunities for accessing investment for basic services?

References

- Sustainable Energy for all: www.sustainableenergyforall.org
- International Finance Cooperation, Sanitation and Safe Water for All: www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/region__ext_content/regions/sub-saharan+africa/publications/ssawa
- UN-Habitat Sustainable Development Goals: www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/11858_1_594728.pdf
- UN-Habitat, Business for Sustainable Urbanisation - Challenges and Opportunities: www.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=2344
- United Nations Global Compact, How Business can Support Development: www.unglobalcompact.org/Issues/partnerships/how_business_can_support_development.html
- World Economic Forum, Infrastructure Summit, African Strategic Infrastructure Initiative, 2013: www.weforum.org/reports/infrastructure-summit-african-strategic-infrastructure-initiative
- You can also visit Endeavor, a global non-profit organization that transforms emerging countries by supporting High-Impact Entrepreneurs: www.endeavor.org
- You can also visit Acumen, a non-profit organization that raises charitable donations to invest in companies, leaders, and ideas that are changing the way the world tackles poverty: <http://acumen.org>