



Connective Cities Virtual Event on

Municipal Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic:

Date: A series of webinars on the 29th of June, 1st of July and the 7th of July, 2020

Introduction

The level of preparedness of cities and their capacities to combat the pandemic varied drastically across the world. Cities that have robust governance and health infrastructure were more capable to manage the pandemic and have registered lower case fatality rates. Furthermore, adopting a combination of proactive surveillance, routine communication, rapid isolation and personal and community protection (e.g. social distancing) measures have proven to be among the most impactful measures adopted by localities in combatting the outbreak of the pandemic.

On the other hand, cities that are hubs for transnational commerce and mobility and/or are characterized with high population density and hyper-connectedness have proven to be the most vulnerable as was the case during previous pandemics. The predisposition for communities in the informal urban settlements is caused by inadequate provision of services such as water, proper sanitation including waste management services and housing. The pandemic has thus exacerbated inequalities and revealed the urgency of addressing these issues.

Since cities play a central role in preparing for and mitigating the impacts of the pandemic, it is necessary to evaluate and assess the municipal response strategies adopted by cities. To this end, Connective Cities' virtual event provides the platform to showcase good practice of municipal response to the pandemic.

Aim of the virtual event

Connective Cities is a German international cooperation project.¹ The project promotes international knowledge-exchange among municipal experts and enables joint learning, peer-to-peer advisory and the development of joint projects on topics of sustainable urban development.² A series of virtual events will be organised with the focus on municipal response to the pandemic. This municipal knowledge-exchange activity aims at analysing and discussing practical examples from municipalities in MENA, Sub Saharan Africa and Germany.

¹ Connective Cities is a joint venture between the Association of German Cities (Deutscher Städtetag), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and Engagement Global / Service Agency Communities in One World. It is supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

² Since its launch in 2014, Connective Cities has already held over 30 workshops attended by more than 2000 participants from over 200 cities in 65 countries worldwide. Connective Cities organised a dialogue event on the topic of *public health protection in biological emergencies at the local level* in Frankfurt in November 2015.

The event will thus provide a platform for learning how to plan, manage and evaluate effective measures to curb the impacts of the pandemic. It will also be possible to discuss individual questions with urban practitioners. Municipal representatives from both political and technical levels are invited to participate in the exchange.

Thematic focus of the events

- 1. Public health and municipal administrative processes:** All countries evoked the public health legal framework and the WHO guidelines to enforce measures to reduce the spread of the virus. Nevertheless, the pandemic has revealed shortcomings in municipal capacities to overcome its implications. Investing in digitalizing municipal administrative processes, IT systems as well as the overall healthcare infrastructure is being prioritized by many localities. Countries have also applied a combination of measures and technologies to monitor and control the situation at both the local and national levels. This session will focus on the possible strategies and measures implemented by public health and administrative municipal actors.
- 2. Municipal service delivery including water, sanitation and solid waste management:** Maintaining high standards of hygiene requires adequate provision of urban services such as water, sanitation and solid waste management which are key in combatting the spread of the virus. In many regions, the pandemic has heightened the existing shortcomings in the provision of these services. Some municipalities have provided temporal measures in order to improve the service delivery. Urban informal settlements in particular, are struggling with the situation, especially where social distancing rules cannot be effectively enforced. This session will focus on municipal service providers in the water and sanitation sectors.
- 3. Economic impact:** The pandemic has negatively impacted the economy on all levels. Most countries resorted to partial or complete lock down that resulted in paralyzing many economic sectors. It is in those cities that imposed the strictest lock down measures that the negative economic impacts are most apparent as per initial observations. A significant part of the labour markets in developing countries is informal and is comprised of daily wagers who have suffered immensely from the lockdown measures that impacted their livelihoods and ability to pay for services. These measures have also had a negative impact on the revenue stream for the municipalities. On the flip side, some economic sectors are witnessing growth. For example, many cities are relying on local manufacturing enterprises to produce medical equipment like masks, protective gear and ventilators which they would import in the past. This session will focus on possible measures to cushion the negative economic impacts of the pandemic on the local level.

Questions we seek to answer in the webinar series:

1. What have been the **core challenges** for the municipalities?
2. What **measures** have municipalities put in place?
3. How do the municipalities deal with **vulnerable groups** which were most affected by the pandemic?
4. Are municipalities and local governments setting different **development- or service-related priorities in the aftermath** of the pandemic?
5. Have there been any **lessons learned** for long term strategies to improve cities' resilience (i.e. preparedness for pandemics or similar events in the future)?

The methodology of the virtual event

The series of webinars will offer a buffet of experiences and instruments from municipalities as well as input from experts. The municipalities will be able to exchange on the measures they have been taking, challenges being experienced, and lessons learnt. The exchange could result in new ideas, improved municipal service delivery, but also activities in areas such as research and development, digitalisation, resource mobilisation etc.

The virtual platform that will host the event allows for interactive and mutual exchange among participants. A chat function will offer the opportunity to collect questions and comments during the event. An exchange between the speakers and audience is planned and will be moderated after each presentation. The entire event will be recorded. The event languages are English and Arabic. Simultaneous translation in both languages will be provided.

Three thematic sessions will take place on the 29th of June, 1st and 7th of July, 2020 at 13:30 CET. To facilitate your participation, you need:

- A reliable internet connection.
- A computer with the latest version of Chrome or FireFox, a webcam and a head set.
- A smart mobile phone & a head-set for the mobile phone.

The links to the virtual meeting room will be shared with the participants in due course.

Participation and contact

If you wish to participate kindly email Dr. Muna Shalan (muna.shalan@giz.de) for **MENA** region, Sophia Kamau (sophia.kamau@giz.de) for **Sub Saharan Africa** and Alex Wagner (Alexander.Wagner@engagement-global.de) or Thiago Garcia (Thiago.Garcia@engagement-global.de) for **German cities and counterparts**.

Please include the following:

1. Your contact information, including position and department in your municipality.
2. Short feedback on the response measures implemented in your municipality highlighting any innovative approaches.
3. Three questions related to the challenges your municipality is facing/ has faced due to the pandemic that you would like to discuss.

We are looking forward to welcoming you to our virtual event!