

Cities worth living in

A home for all

Cities are centres of societal change, cultural development and economic prosperity. However, they can also be places of marginalisation, violence and inhumane living conditions. The 21st century is marked by rapid growth of the urban population on an unprecedented scale. As a result, cities are becoming home to the majority of the human population. More than ever cities are challenged to provide a dignified and secure environment that is worth living in for all of their inhabitants. This responsibility goes beyond providing social and economic services to reduce inequality and associated social tensions. Cities are also responsible to create and allow spaces for social interaction, diversity, belonging and individual cultural character.

Background

The world has an increasing urban face. Cities are becoming home to the majority of the global population. As cities are growing, so are the challenges they face. Poverty and social exclusion are more and more becoming urban issues. One of the greatest urban challenges is to reduce social and economic inequality, factors that nurture violence and social unrest.

In emerging economies and developing countries cities foremost grow in slums and informal settlements. Even without further growth, such settlements often lack adequate access to economic and social infrastructure. Cities therefore are confronted with the question of how to best provide adequate basic services to their growing populations, with sufficient shelter and living space, a reliable supply of energy and drinking water, waste water and solid waste disposal, as well as access to

health care and education services. Clear rights of ownership are also crucial in order to allow residents to live without constant existential fears faced by most inhabitants of informal settlements.

Not only the private space must be worth living in, also public spaces need attention. They are the central places of social interaction and indispensable to social cohesion. Available and above all affordable mobility allows people to participate in society and economic activity. Until now, urban traffic concepts have too often focused on cars instead of the people. This exacerbates the problem of exclusion.

Another demand being placed on cities is to promote social services and institutions. Public green spaces and leisure, culture and relaxation facilities are an aspect of urban quality of life that should not be underestimated. Cities also need to create safe living spaces for their residents – regardless of gender, age or social, ethnic or religious belonging - spaces in which people can move and live without being afraid of becoming victims of crime or violence. But the role of cities goes beyond providing services. After all, cities are also places that people identify with, and venues for public



City in Honduras. Photo: KfW-Photoarchive / Bernhard Schurian.

discourse. Different worlds and cultures come together in cities. A city has to be able to cope with this diversity and meet the different needs it entails. This diversity alone is what makes cities dynamic and innovative. In a globalised world, preserving urban character and diversity improves social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. Creating livable cities for all is thus the central element of the New Urban Agenda that was adopted in November 2016 by the international community during the World Summit for Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III).

The KfW development approach

KfW Development Bank works to improve urban living conditions in its partner countries. This starts with the provision of adequate basic services. KfW also promotes the creation of adequate housing, with a particular focus on social and energy efficiency standards. The measures extend beyond individual sectors, and can include the promotion of entire districts. This way, urban areas often gain reliable access to basic services for the first time, while at the same time the people's legal means of existence is secured. By creating islands of security that expand bit by bit, public spaces are once again made available for social coexistence. The development bank is also involved in creating green spaces and leisure facilities as well as preserving historic buildings, and in doing so promotes quality of life and social cohesion while aiming to preserve the diversity and character of each city.



Contact

KfW Group
KfW Development Bank
Sector Policy Unit Urban Development and Natural Resources
Palmengartenstrasse 5–9
60325 Frankfurt
Telephone +49 69 7431 -9901
solveig.buhl@kfw.de



Pupils, parents and builders of a primary school in Honduras. Photo: KfW photo archive / Bernhard Schurian.

Security for an urban future

Violence is on the rise in many Central American cities, and represents a serious and growing obstacle to development. The region's murder rates are the highest in the world. Young people are disproportionately likely to be victims or perpetrators. German development cooperation is working to tackle this rising violence and criminality with its regional programme "Promoting young people and peaceful coexistence in Central America".

In El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, the programme is working to improve peaceful coexistence among the population and get young people actively involved in social, political and economic life. The urban community provides a point of orientation in order to reduce violence, which is why KfW is investing in public facilities and spaces as well as youth facilities and organisations in the relevant city districts. More visually appealing and intact public spaces drive criminality away and open up new social and economic perspectives for young people. Education is a key starting point for creating prospects and ultimately also "safe spaces".

That is why the project also promotes the social and professional skills of young people between the ages of 14 and 25 who live in city districts with high rates of violence. This improves the young people's prospects for employment and a better future. As the living conditions for families improve, the general quality of life for the entire population living in those districts also rises. This open approach promotes the general development of social cohesion in the individual districts and improves the integration of poorer areas within the city.