

# CITIES on the FRONTLINE



Monthly Manchester Briefing #36– 02 September 2021

## Cities for a Resilient Recovery:

### International Lessons on Recovery from COVID-19

This month, we consider how to develop recovery initiatives in education, food systems, urban planning and using learned lessons to move forward in the face of multiple stressors afflicting cities globally.

#### International Lessons

- Education models post-COVID-19 in Latin America (Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia, Colombia, Paraguay & El Salvador)
- Agriculture financial initiatives in COVID recovery (Global)
- Renewing urban planning strategies (Global)
- Using recovery to push locally produced food (Brazil, Mexico & Argentina)
- Planning for recovery with learned lessons (Global)
- Building multi-hazard resilience with new recovery strategies (Croatia)

#### Useful Webinars

### INTERNATIONAL LESSONS

**Health and Wellbeing:** [Everyone living and working in the city has access to what they need to survive and thrive.](#)

**Consider the role of new educational models after COVID-19.** During COVID-19, schools were forced to move to remote delivery of teaching. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) note that high levels of pre-existing inequalities (e.g. poverty) have exacerbated the negative impacts of the pandemic on children's education. The World Bank report predicts that the "shock on human capital will substantially reduce **intergenerational mobility** and the likelihood of children from low educated families to complete secondary school". The bank also presents a call to action to address the significant learning loss experienced by Latin American and Caribbean children. As countries are transitioning back to face-to-face or to more hybrid styles of education delivery, consider:

- Work in partnership with schools, community groups (e.g. parental committees) and local social care services to **identify vulnerable children** and develop targeted measures (e.g. through remedial programmes) to ensure that schools are teaching at an appropriate level for all children. Specifically take into account the **learning needs of children from lower-income families** who may not have had the resources at home to keep up with remote learning measures
  - For example, 'Alerta Escuela', Peru uses early warning systems to identify students who are at risk of dropping out or who are in need of targeted interventions
- Guide and support schools on how best to combine remote and in-person learning (e.g. the Ceibal initiative in Uruguay). To **increase accessibility**, blended learning recovery solutions should consider low- or no-tech options (e.g. educational TV programmes/local radio/community youth groups)
- Design a **long-term transformational plan** for accelerating the digital transformation of local and national Education Management and Information Systems (EMIS), for example:
  - The World Bank is collaborating with education agencies to establish a "new generation of EMIS based on an enterprise architecture focusing on learning data". The programme will collate best practices, tools and guidance that aim to enable education agencies to implement **technology-driven solutions** that accelerate **cost effective educational programmes** and generate high investment returns

See also TMB Issue 33 – a case study which explores the "attainment gap" and digital divide, detailing international strategies that aim to support children to catch up on learning time lost during the pandemic

**Sources:**

<https://tinyurl.com/332jes9v>

<https://tinyurl.com/9tv6zmt2>

**Economy and Society:** The social & financial systems that enable urban populations to live peacefully, and act collectively.

**Consider recovery and renewal initiatives that align agriculture with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

Agriculture is fundamental to sustaining livelihoods, by providing employment, income, and being key in the response to climate change – and **food security and nutrition** are challenges that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Recovery and renewal present an opportunity to **reform agricultural production** in line with the SDGs. One of the challenges for such reforms is funding them, given that post-COVID-19 economies will have high levels of fiscal debt. Consider the strategies proposed by United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to fund the recovery and renewal actions needed for a new and more sustainable agricultural sector:

**Funding and finance for response and recovery**

- Focus response and recovery on **food security across the most vulnerable regions**, by supporting consumers and producers to acquire essential goods
- Take a regional approach to fund programs among several communities, cities, or counties, instead of focusing only on the local jurisdiction
- Implement focused tax discounts for the most vulnerable producers and consumers
- Promote payments for environmental services (**PES**) **as a mechanism to transfer resources to producers** who commit to protecting the environment, or provide an environmental conservation service
- Involve firms in specific social projects, e.g. through "parafiscal" taxes – those taxes based on employees, imports, or exports, and are used to fund part of specific programs, reducing budget pressures without risking the quality of the intervention

**Funding and financing to renew**

- New types of funding should be used to achieve the **sustainable transformation that agriculture needs** e.g. Defra's 'Sustainable Farming Incentive 2021 (UK) or the Agricultural Sustainability Framework (Australia)
- Invest in **climate change mitigation measures in agriculture**. For examples, see the following papers: 'Technical options for climate change mitigation in agriculture' (European Union); or 'Strategies for mitigating climate change in agriculture' (USA)
- Start **financial inclusion programs** for vulnerable agricultural producers. Such programs can be conditional on producers adopting sustainable cropping practices
- Define new approaches to social responsibility, in which firms commit to work with local government and NGOs in risk reduction programmes

**Sources:**

<https://tinyurl.com/97rmxyz9>

**Infrastructure and Environment:** The man-made and natural systems that provide critical services, and protect and connect urban assets, enabling the flow of foods, services, and knowledge.

**Consider renewed urban planning strategies.** Historically, public health crises, such as pandemics, have transformed various elements of city planning – namely, urban ecology, sanitation systems, public parks, street design and housing regulations – and how people inhabit and interact within urban areas. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed various pre-existing problems, but also brought **new opportunities to city planning**. National, regional and local governments have the opportunity to address both old and new problems in their recovery and renewal plans. The UN recommends the following:

- **"Strengthen coordination between cities, regions and territories** through the creation of shared decision-making platforms", in order to leverage shared interests and align policies
- Recognize the **link between public health and environmental quality**, and introduce environmental protection measures, such as blue-green networks (natural and semi-natural landscape elements like trees and ponds), urban growth boundaries, land use and zoning regulations, and carbon-taxes to reduce ecosystem deterioration and improve air quality
- Improve logistics and supply chains, including:
  - "connectivity within cities and regions through national urban policies and plans that facilitate the secure flow and movement of goods, services and labour
  - Building regional resilience by **strengthening localized means of production for essential provisions** such as food and medical supply chains, by, for example, incentivizing investments that support local means of production and/or shorten supply chains"
- Increase resilience, by **identifying and improving urban "weak spots"**. These are locations vulnerable to shocks or stresses due to issues such as overcrowding, limited or poor connectivity, or being situated in flood plains
- Prioritise neighbourhoods in city planning, with a focus on developing **"self-contained and socially inclusive communities"**. Consider the concept of a 15-minute neighbourhood, where all facilities can be accessed within a 15 minute walk
- Develop a strategy for public spaces and **urban mobility** to renew public areas and their potential uses. For example, in Milan:
  - The "Strade Aperte" project which details Milan's strategies for cycling and pedestrianization to "guarantee measures of distance in urban travel and for sustainable mobility"
  - The "Piazza Aperte" project which aims to "bring public space back to the centre of the neighbourhood and the life of the inhabitants"
- Address housing issues through public health strategies, recognising the social, economic and environmental benefits of adequate housing.

- Identify and tackle the fragilities in infrastructure, e.g. the design of buildings such as offices, factories, plants, and hospitals that have emerged as epicentres for COVID-19 outbreaks

**Sources:**

<https://tinyurl.com/3cbrsknb>

**Consider recovery and renewal as an opportunity to increase community access to locally produced food.** Latin America benefits from vast access to natural resources, however many people living in rural areas have limited access to locally produced food and rely heavily on imported goods. The fragilities in food supply chains were exacerbated by COVID-19, which left people at risk of not being able to meet their immediate food needs. Recovery and renewal provides an opportunity to **support Latin America’s rural agricultural sector** to renew its practices, **promote community health and resilience**, and contribute to **achieving environmental sustainability**. Consider the actions proposed by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) for COVID-19 recovery and renewal:

**Transform food production**

- Finance and support the production of a diverse range of agricultural products. Invest in multi-crop programs together with small and medium producers
- Reduce food waste by providing **access to locally produced food and resources**
- Prioritise local consumption and distribution of agricultural products over exports
- Promote the **adoption of healthy diets with local produce** through voluntary information groups, labelling policies, eating healthy campaigns, and fiscal incentives to schools that purchase local produce

**Rural development**

- Provide quality education and skills-training to the rural agricultural sector
- Establish **sustainable practices in the agricultural sector**, that recognize the diversity of the ecosystem and the cultural and traditional practices or its inhabitants
- Increase the infrastructure for public services and connect with urban areas. This can help to reduce rural vulnerability and enables producers to access urban markets for their products

**Sustainable agriculture**

- Promote water conservation and soil maintenance practices
- Protect the ecosystem by delimiting conservation areas outside of agricultural practices
- Implement **early warning systems and risk reduction programmes** focused on local hazards

**Sources:**

<https://tinyurl.com/2t24bc68>

**Leadership and Strategy:** The processes that promote effective leadership, inclusive decision-making, empowered stakeholders, and integrated planning.

**Consider lessons learned from previous crises for COVID-19 recovery and renewal.** COVID-19 differs from previous crises in terms of its scale, its complex and prolonged nature, and the fragilities that it has exposed. Yet, the disruptions and losses experienced are broadly similar to those brought about by other recent major emergencies.

Consider the lessons learned from previous disaster recovery efforts that aim to “**promote longer-term, integrated thinking and planning, to create pathways out of the pandemic that more effectively support recovery**” and renewal:

- Analyse **how the crisis has changed vulnerability** (prolonged crises in particular). Use this knowledge to inform recovery strategies and renewal initiatives (e.g. Ecuador)
- Recognise the long-term needs of recovery and renewal. Acknowledge that **the impacts of pandemic are not static** and will not end on a particular date (e.g. India). A flexible and adaptable approach will support longer-term activities that can change where and when required
- Plan recovery and resilience programmes that integrate actions to deal with the risk of other hazards that can interact and exacerbate the impacts of the current crisis (e.g. Ethiopia & Mozambique)
- Implement an **approach that targets the most vulnerable and marginalised sectors of the population**, given the uneven impacts of the pandemic and response strategies (e.g. Montserrat)
- Depoliticise, as far as possible, the recovery agenda by establishing the needs of those more vulnerable above political interests (e.g. Chennai)
- Understand recovery and renewal as a holistic process that focuses on the impacts of COVID-19 on the economic, social, and mental wellbeing of communities (e.g. Dominica)
- Support community-building activities and engage the community in recovery and mitigation activities (e.g. Colombia)

**Sources:**

<https://tinyurl.com/26axxzav>

**Consider recovery and renewal strategies that build multi-hazard resilience.** The proliferation of concurrent disasters (including natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and technological threats), alongside COVID-19, highlights the need for recovery and **renewal strategies that tackle the multiple hazards facing society**. Croatia’s National Recovery Plan considers both the lessons learned by the COVID-19 crisis and the earthquake experienced in 2020. Consider some of Croatia’s recovery and resilience strategies:

**Economy, education, the environment & research**

- Introduce new labour market policies that focus on building green and digital skills, and specifically target vulnerable groups
- Recognise the economic value of the culture and tourism industries through targeted investment
- Review the social welfare system, establish new social services, and implement measures that increase “coverage, adequacy, and targeting of social benefits”
- Reform the education system by updating school curricula, “increase access to early childhood education and care, and implement single-shift, full-day teaching”
- Establish partnerships between universities, research centres, and the private sector, to inform the **development of context specific risk management strategies** through collaborative research and action

**Digitalization of government**

- Decentralise governance practices, to simplify and increase the efficiency of local government systems
- Increase the use of ICT in statutory agencies (e.g. health care and judiciary systems)
- Implement **community outreach services**, to promote and integrate resilience building activities at the local level

**Infrastructure**

- Targeted investment in repair and reconstruction of infrastructure impacted by the earthquake and COVID-19, both public and private, including local heritage sites

- Regulate, create, or change local building regulations, codes of practice and requirements for infrastructure, to consider the needs of a multi-hazard management approach
- Improve the water and waste management system through strategies that focus on the environment and transitioning to a **circular economy**

**Sources:**

<https://tinyurl.com/8yse6tvn>

<https://tinyurl.com/3hjxmr7k>

## USEFUL WEBINARS

Key past and upcoming webinars on how cities are building resilience in the face of the pandemic and other shocks & stresses.

| Date            | Webinar Title (Click to register or to access materials)   |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>Previous</b> |  |
| 22 July         | <a href="#">Resilience Cities Network, World Bank &amp; University of Manchester: Cities on The Frontline Speaker Series- Building Effective Food Systems for Cities</a>   |
| 12 Aug          | <a href="#">Resilient Cities Network, World Bank &amp; University of Manchester: Cities on The Frontline Speaker Series- Private Sector Engagement in Urban Resilience</a> |
| 12 Aug          | <a href="#">Building the resilience of essential services post-Covid</a>   |
| <b>Upcoming</b> |  |
| 3 Sept          | <a href="#">Continuity &amp; Resilience Series: Human Aspects of Resilience</a>  |
| 8 Sept          | <a href="#">Spontaneous volunteers lessons learned in Argentina and Chile</a>  |
| 9 Sept          | <a href="#">Resilient Cities Network &amp; World Bank : Cities on The Frontline Speaker Series- Climate Resilient Urban Sanitation</a>                                     |
| 21 Sept         | <a href="#">Disasterville</a>  |
|                 |  |

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### What is the monthly briefing on Cities for a Resilient Recovery?

Every month the [University of Manchester](#) brings together relevant international practices and examples on recovery from COVID-19. The bi-weekly briefing is curated by the [Resilient Cities Network](#) to bring key lessons and examples targeted for resilience officers, emergency planners and other city practitioners. The structure of the briefing follows the [City Resilience Framework](#) – specifically the four drivers that cities have been identified as mattering the most when a city faces chronic stresses or sudden shocks – Health & Wellbeing, Economy & Society; Infrastructure & Environment; and Leadership & Strategy.

For more international examples please register @ [ambbs.ac.uk/covidrecovery](https://ambbs.ac.uk/covidrecovery)

**[Join the Coalition of Cities for a Resilient Recovery here](#)**

If you would be willing to contribute your knowledge to this briefing series (via a 30-minute interview) please contact [Duncan.Shaw-2@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Duncan.Shaw-2@manchester.ac.uk)