

CITIES on the FRONTLINE



Monthly Manchester Briefing #37 – 30 September 2021

Cities for a Resilient Recovery:

International Lessons on Recovery from COVID-19

This month, we consider how community well-being initiatives, new funding models, and digitalization of society can play a key role in an equitable response and recovery from COVID-19.

International Lessons

- Tackle loneliness through community well-being initiatives (UK)
- Address poverty, inequality, and resilience through accessible public services (Global)
- Protect agricultural producers and workers in COVID-19 recovery (Mexico)
- Support city economic recovery and resilience through new funding models (Global)
- Using shared platforms to facilitate and support disaster risk research and partnerships (Nepal)
- Considering budget constraints to prevent fiscal debt in COVID-19 recovery (Spain)
- Manage and communicate disaster risks through digital governance (LAC)

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 local initiatives to tackle loneliness and build community resilience. [TMB 39](#) noted how “tackling loneliness” was a key priority for community wellbeing in the next year, particularly in rural areas with high numbers of elderly residents. For example, ‘TED Ageing Better’ in East Lindsey is working to foster sustainable resilience in older people by strengthening social capital in the community and providing specific support services. Consider, from TED in East Lindsey’s recent report:

- When establishing **community well-being initiatives, focus on “flexible and person-centred” activities.** For example:
 - Magna Vitae’s Community Health Activity Project employs a range of outreach mechanisms (online, telephone, one to one and group meetings) to ensure their service is inclusive. This has led to higher levels of engagement, enabling the development of innovative activities to meet diverse needs of the community
- Co-produce recovery initiatives (see [TMB 39](#)) and underpin these initiatives with a common goal e.g. to increase social capital and thus resilience amongst older people in the community
- **Strengthen “peer-to-peer relationships”** which can develop ties amongst residents and increase their sense of belonging. Such initiatives benefited from the delivery of “activity packs” that keep residents engaged and connected to people in their community during periods of isolation and social distancing

- Build on the relationships developed through well-being initiatives and co-production activities to **support digital inclusion and build digital skills** e.g. through community donation programmes (computers/laptops) and skill-building workshops facilitated by local volunteers
- Examples of strategies to tackle loneliness in Northern Ireland (NI) include:
 - The Department for Communities works with Libraries NI and National Museums NI to deliver projects that address loneliness, e.g. “Supporting People”, a programme which aims to improve levels of digital connectivity and digital inclusion
 - The Village Catalyst Pilot Project, which aims to tackle social isolation and rural poverty. The project will repair vacated buildings and repurpose them to improve local access to critical services and facilities, and provide increased space for community-led projects and social activities

Sources:

<https://tinyurl.com/j8cptz92>

<https://tinyurl.com/2zx7u9jf>

Consider how cities can build resilience by addressing poverty and inequality. Cities have grown considerably in the recent decades but this growth has exacerbated existing problems related to poverty and inequality. Deep-rooted inequalities have heavily influenced the degree and nature of COVID-19 impacts on society as whole. Thus, reducing inequalities, marginalization, and poverty should be a cornerstone of the strategy to recover and renew to increase resilience. Consider the following recommendations from the UN:

- Ensure that strategies provide un-registered people (e.g. people who are homeless or reside in slums) with **access to basic and affordable services**, like water, waste disposal and sanitation facilities. Longer-term strategies should work to build the resilience of people living in informal settlements and reduce their vulnerability to crises
 - For example, the DARAJA initiative is working to build the climate resilience of vulnerable communities who are living in informal settlements in Tanzania and Kenya. The goal is to improve the climate resilience of vulnerable people by increasing their access to climate and early warning information through feedback loops that enable hazard communication and awareness in informal communities
- Establish **stronger labour and health protection** for those not covered by formal government support systems e.g. casual/zero contract workers and people who work in the informal labour market
- “Plan for **mixed use, socially diverse communities**”, to avoid the creation of segregated communities (e.g. migrant worker complexes) of discriminated groups (e.g. ethnic minorities) when planning for public housing
- Establish policies that increase the **long-term affordability of housing**, by implementing measures such as “housing price caps, rent vouchers, subsidies, and investments in affordable or/and social housing”. Consider the example of Portugal, where the Resilience and Recovery Plan includes a total of EUR 2.7 million in affordable housing
- Implement strategies that improve **connectivity in cities and affordable transport** options, particularly for low-income neighbourhoods, including cycling and open, safe and affordable public transportation (e.g. buses, trains, among others)
- Invest in **digital inclusion, by increasing infrastructure and training programmes**, so that vulnerable populations can take advantage of recent trends such as digital government
- Support a comprehensive recovery and renewal strategy for **densely populated areas** e.g. slums and informal settlements, by implementing a variety of measures, such as “equitable land management, regulation of property markets, and application of progressive land-based finance and value capture instruments”

Invest in communities, by engaging with them through **meaningful participatory and inclusive methods** (see TMB Issue 39 on co-production). Actively work to include “marginalized and minority groups, including persons of African descent, indigenous peoples, minorities and LGBTQ+”, so that their experiences and perspectives are fully heard and accounted for.

Sources:

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

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

Consider the vulnerability of agricultural producers and workers after COVID-19. Like many other sectors, agricultural production has been significantly impacted by COVID-19 restrictions. Farmers and workers in rural areas in developing countries live with low levels of income and scarce access to public services so disasters and pandemics increase their vulnerability. Even so, the sector provides an opportunity for economic recovery, given that in countries such as Mexico agriculture grew by up to 20% during 2020. The Agricultural Association of Culiacan River in Mexico has implemented measures to protect and prevent the spread of infection between agricultural workers and sustain their sources of income. Consider the priorities of their recovery approach for the sector:

Maintain agricultural production, livelihoods, and income (Michoacán experience)

- Strengthen the local chains of production and the local partnerships between agricultural and livestock producers and providers. In Michoacán, products that were mainly export-oriented are also being sold at the local level through the coordination of local farmers and governments
- Implement subsidies at the local and state levels to protect small and medium-sized producers against increases in the price of inputs (e.g. farming equipment), particularly given the increased demand for such inputs during the recovery stages
- Take advantage of existing local, regional, and international treaties and agreements that facilitate commerce and the exchange of products. In the absence of such arrangements, governments and financial institutions should provide financial guarantees to enable small producers to participate in these markets in the medium term

Protect the health and safety of agricultural workers and farmers. Increase preventive measures (Sinaloa experience)

- Supply PPE to agricultural workers and increase sanitization measures in agricultural facilities
- Implement sanitization protocols for the pickup and transport of workers to the field and back to their residency
- Identify workers at risk because of previous health conditions, or because of dangerous working environments. Identify and prevent children and young teenagers from working in the fields

Source:

<https://tinyurl.com/27krd35t>

Consider new funding models to increase city recovery and resilience. Cities' have been in the forefront of the fight against the pandemic, by providing emergency services, containing the spread of disease, mitigating the resulting social and economic impact, and coordinating efforts for recovery. In addition, cities have delivered financial aid to companies and families in need, and reduced or suspended municipal taxes (see [European Committee of the Regions](#)). Naturally, this has impacted their public finances and there have been various calls to change how cities are funded, in order to increase fiscal resilience. The current funding model for most cities, around the world, is primarily based in transfers from national governments. Own revenues, such as taxes, comprise the second most important source of revenue to cities, followed by external financing. The UN proposes reversing the current model, by decreasing the dependency on national transfers and increasing revenues from own revenues and external financing. The UN recommends the following:

- Provide **funding to cities to support economic recovery**, for example:
 - National governments could provide emergency funding to cities earmarked for service provision, infrastructure, and special relief programs for populations
- Improve the accessibility of finance and credit for local governments, by allowing them direct access to grant/loan applications and enabling them to **develop public private partnerships**
- "Strengthen multilateral financing and cooperation" to allow cities to fund recovery and renewal programs. For example:
 - International organizations, development banks, and national governments could establish **dedicated global funds to finance urban** responses to COVID-19, to help cities and their local **economic and financial recoveries**
 - The [European Union Solidarity Fund](#) will cover 100% of costs incurred by Portuguese cities, associated with the fight against COVID-19
- Channel **financial support to productive sectors** most at need. City authorities could facilitate coordinated action across urban areas to provide "loan programmes, grants, tax incentives, and temporary rent deferrals" to businesses in need

- Introduce incentives for “**sustainable production and consumption** through new policies, subsidies and knowledge transfers”. E.g. grants for new clean energy strategies such as green roofs
- “**Address dysfunctional and exploitative development practices** such as land speculation and unserviceable sprawl”, by, for example, implementing and enforcing clear regulations and introducing taxes to increase own revenues

Source:

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

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

Consider shared platforms to facilitate and support the coordination of disaster risk research and partnerships. The [Himalayan Risk Research Institute](#) (HRI) is developing a platform for disaster risk reduction students, researchers and young professionals to conduct research and share findings to inform policy and practice. The platform aims to build resilience through a scientific approach to DRR initiatives in Nepal. Consider establishing a DRR coordination platform in partnership with local and national government and non-government organisations, national and international research institutes to:

- **Facilitate and promote the work and research of young scientists, researchers and professionals** to build a scientific base for local DRR initiatives
- Establish a “skill transfer mechanism” whereby **training, field research and workshops can build the knowledge and skills** of young scientists and professionals and in turn benefit local DRR activities
- **Share research and findings, and establish local databases** to inform local governments on disaster preparedness and response activities that aim to build resilience

Involve young people in the co-production of local development planning

Source:

<https://tinyurl.com/afbp9ty6>

Consider how recovery and resilience programs account for budget constraints. Local and national governments are investing significant resources in recovery of public health, economic and employment regeneration, humanitarian assistance, among other areas. Consideration of budget constraints is crucial – for example, the OECD uses Spain as an example to highlight the dual-task: support vulnerable people and reduce public spending. Consider strategies to prevent fiscal debt following recovery from COVID-19:

- Implement the use of subsidies for vulnerable populations during recovery
- Promote efficient use of resources, e.g. focus on **sectors most severely impacted** and have strong productivity potential, such as small-medium businesses
- Re-regulate future retirement arrangements for workers (e.g. measures such as “disincentivise early retirement”) to reduce the gap between the average labour market exit age and the statutory retirement age
- Identify local **jobs which can be targeted toward the unemployed/marginalized** (e.g. infrastructure/green economy jobs created through recovery and renewal strategies) and skills development opportunities (e.g. through apprenticeships) to increase employability

Make public spending transparent using ICT platforms. Specify how much is spent, in which programmes, and the number of beneficiaries

Source:

<https://tinyurl.com/yxy6a22p>

<https://tinyurl.com/2ak58ku7>

Consider the role of digital government in the management and communication of disaster risk. Data management and risk communications have been in a constant process of adaptation throughout the pandemic. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has released a summary

of the main challenges and learnings for public administrators who manage data and communicate risk across Central America. ECLAC has identified digital government as an essential feature for public administration and disaster management. Consider their recommendations to strengthen the processes run by local government offices during the recovery phase.

Lessons for digital government

- Increase the role and use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) in governmental procedures and processes
- Coordinate, through those ICTs, databases across different offices and Ministries, and levels of government
- Invest in the digitalization of society, from schools to public offices, to investment in infrastructure and subsidies for equipment
- Integrate society into a feedback loop of communication through digital tools, as a measure of accountability and as a constant process of evaluation of services

Examples from Central America

- Establish “home office” schemes for government employees during the response and recovery of COVID-19
- Use ICTs to centralize information about the spread of COVID-19 and the amount of resources available across hospitals and clinics. Apps could also be useful to communicate risk to the public and provide medical appointments through video calls
- Use communication apps (e.g. WhatsApp), to continue online classes during the recovery phase, or as part of hybrid, combined online and face-to-face schemes
- Make public procedures accessible through online platforms, so that people do not need to visit public offices during the recovery phase

Challenges to address digital governance

- Integrate digitalization of public services into the wider public agenda
- Identify available infrastructure/resources that are available. Identify new resources needed
- Involve communities in the process of digitalization and government evaluation (see [TMB Issue 38](#) on co-production)
- Generate strategies to support inter-organizational cooperation

See also [TMB Issue 37](#) Briefing A on risk communications as part of the local resilience capability.

Source:

<https://tinyurl.com/uf28xdur>

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)
Previous	
2 September	University of Manchester and British Standards Institute (BSi) – Continuity & Resilience Series: Human aspects of resilience
9 September	Resilient Cities Network and World Bank – Cities on the Frontline: Climate Resilient Urban Sanitation
20 & 21 September	Emergency Planning Society (EPS) – Emergency Planning Society Annual Conference
23 September	The Manchester Series and The International Emergency Management Society (TIEMS) – Managing meaningful recovery from COVID
23 September	Resilient Cities Network and World Bank – Cities on the Frontline: Co-Designing a Resilient Recovery in Cities
Upcoming	
14 October	Resilient Cities Network and World Bank – Cities on the Frontline: Advancing a Resilient Recovery in Cities Part 2
15 October	The Manchester Series and The International Emergency Management Society (TIEMS) – Anticipating a resilient future

Produced by The University of Manchester, UK (Professor Duncan Shaw, Róisín Jordan, Alan Boyd, Dr Andrew McClelland, Fábio M. V. Sousa, and Eduardo Robles Chavez,) in partnership with the Resilient Cities Network (Gladys Tan)

What is the weekly briefing on Cities for a Resilient Recovery?

Every fortnight 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 @ ambs.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