



SDG 11: Progress, gaps and recommendations for the UK

Compiled by:
Sightsavers and Real Equality for All (Reall)



Rates of urbanisation are growing exponentially. Globally, 3.5 billion people, or 55% of the population, live in urban areas and by 2045 this is forecast to grow to 6 billion.¹ 24% of the urban population live in informal settlements – around 1 billion residents – and by 2030, this number is expected to rise to around 3 billion, all of whom will be in need of decent homes.² **Goal 11** covers a vast range of issues, from improved housing, transport and town planning, to reducing air pollution, accessible green spaces and disaster risk reduction.

These issues are critical to the Agenda as a whole and reflect significant links with other SDGs, such as Goal 3 on health, **Goal 6** on access to clean water and sanitation, **Goal 10** on reducing inequalities and **Goal 13** on combating climate change. Furthermore, commitments made under **Goal 11** are consistent with those in other international frameworks, notably the UN Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which underpins the commitment in **Target 11.5** to reduce the number of deaths and economic impact of disasters; and the New Urban Agenda (Habitat III), which outlines the shared international vision for well-planned, well-managed and sustainable urbanisation.³

DFID is a leader in responding to the urbanisation agenda. In 2017, the UK government spent £1.2bn, or 13.5%, of all UK ODA on areas such as research, urban and rural development and planning, multisector aid and environment protection policy.⁴ This represents the third largest area of UK ODA, after humanitarian aid and health. DFID has a

range of policies relating to the implementation of **Goal 11**, including support for sustainable transport systems and urban infrastructure.

DFID's 2017 EDS highlights "the need to step up efforts on energy, infrastructure, urban development, manufacturing and commercial agriculture", and this is further reflected in DFID's 2018 Single Departmental Plan.⁵

ICAI recently published a review into DFID's transport and urban infrastructure investments, concluding that DFID had a coherent strategy, consistent with its overall objectives, and could demonstrate clear impact in its identified niche.⁶ DFID fund a number of major programmes: the Infrastructure and Cities for Economic Development; the Cities and Infrastructure for Growth programmes, through which the UK government has pledged up to £165m over the next five years; and the Community Led Infrastructure Finance Facility, managed by Reall and which has been working since 2002 to provide affordable housing in the Global South.

Nevertheless, there remain a number of areas that need to be improved, especially as urban growth rates are soaring. Cities can be engines of growth leading to development and poverty reduction across numerous sectors. For example, by stimulating the supply of secure, quality, accessible and affordable homes, positive impact is made across a range of indicators: health levels, including mental health, improve with the potential to lessen job or school days lost to illness; household incomes often increase due to informal service provision, and rents in slums or informal settlements are often higher than in formal housing; safety, especially for women and children is increased; and so on. Additionally, housing development is a significant sector for job creation.

1. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview>

2. Ibid.

3. <https://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework>; <http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/>

4. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/762108/Statistics-International-Development-Final-UK-Aid-Spend-2017a.pdf

5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfids-economic-development-strategy-2017>; and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/department-for-international-development-single-departmental-plan>

6. <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/html-report/infrastructure/>

The private sector is key for the investment that is needed to provide sustainable housing and infrastructure in urban settings, but there needs to be a positive policy environment to stimulate pro-poor investment.

Affordable housing, as an alternative to slum dwelling, is a critical path out of poverty, for example through the health benefits of improved sanitation, or by giving access as an asset owner to credit from financial institutions. Whilst DFID has a significant number of programmes, there are some areas where they could play a more constructive role to unlock more investment from the private sector for achieving **Goal 11**. These include: better internal coordination to ensure that staff working on urban development and the private sector are aware of and able to make the most of each other’s programmes; and supporting governments to change policies on land access, approval rates for inclusive developments and formal banking systems that cater for low income communities.

ICAI concluded their review into DFID’s work on transport and urban infrastructure with the critique that it “lacks a systematic approach to inclusion.” In particular, DFID programmes often emphasise the value of economic growth over the impact on poor people, women and people with disabilities.⁷ A positive relationship between economic growth and reducing inequalities cannot be assumed and ICAI recommend that DFID needs to specifically address poverty reduction in its urban development work, including targeting marginalised groups, women and people with disabilities, ensuring that they monitor “intended and unintended impacts on target groups.”⁸ DFID has accepted this and outlined the need to learn from successful programmes and to take “forward work on inclusive infrastructure following the Disability Summit in July 2018.”⁹ Following up on this recommendation will be critical.

Goal 11 includes two Targets that reference people with disabilities (**11.2** on accessible transport; and **11.7** on green and public spaces) and as a whole recognises the need for inclusive human settlements. DFID’s recently published Strategy for Disability Inclusive Development states that the UK government will increase investment into disability-inclusive infrastructure.¹⁰ The accompanying Delivery Plan references the Infrastructure and Cities for Economic Development Programme and programmes in Uganda, Nepal and India as examples from which to create DFID’s approach to disability-inclusive infrastructure.¹¹ DFID needs to ensure that this strategy is translated into more and better disability-inclusive programmes and that inclusion and accessibility are mainstreamed throughout all of DFID’s urban development work.

7. <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/html-report/infrastructure/>

8. Ibid.

9. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/758904/transport-urban-infrastructure.pdf

10. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfids-disability-inclusion-strategy-2018-to-2023>

11. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/760999/Disability-Inclusion-Strategy-delivery-plan.pdf

DFID’s recent commitment to embedding universal design in its programming, to ensure buildings and environments consider the needs of people with disabilities from the start, is welcomed, but a recent ICAI review found that commitments to universal design are not always carried through into terms of reference or implementation.¹² More on the importance of inclusive infrastructure can be found under **Goal 9**.

DFID’s EDS recognises the need for expanding job opportunities for young people and people with disabilities and increased investment in this area is a deliverable under the new DFID Strategy for Disability Inclusive Development.¹³ Nevertheless, there is little information about how this will be achieved in the context of building sustainable cities and communities.



Target 11.2:

By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

This Target is essential to the achievement of **Goal 11**, with links with significant other SDGs and Targets, including:

- **3.6:** To halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.
- **8.5:** On full and productive employment for all, including for women, young people and persons with disabilities, for which accessible transport, especially public transport, is a critical factor in access.
- **13.2:** To integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning. Transport is a major source of CO2 emissions. Therefore, commitments made in the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement will not be possible without significant investment in sustainable transport.

12. <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/ICAI-Disability-Review.pdf>

13. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfids-disability-inclusion-strategy-2018-to-2023>

Target 11.5:

By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations.

The UN Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction highlighted the fact that between 2005 and 2015 over 700,000 people lost their lives as a result of disasters. In addition 1.4 million people have been injured and 23 million made homeless.¹⁴ Overall, 1.5 billion people were affected by disasters, and marginalised communities were disproportionately affected.

The UK government has stated that building resilience is a core element of DFID’s approach to both development and humanitarian programmes and ICAI concluded in 2018 that “between 2011 and 2015, DFID resourced and implemented a largely successful disaster resilience mainstreaming process”, giving a “green-amber” rating for DFID’s work in this area.¹⁵ The humanitarian Rapid Response Facility now provides transitional shelters, rather than tents, and materials, recognising that humanitarian aid in the immediate response is rarely only for the short-term. DFID’s leadership in this area is welcome, but areas that require greater investment and attention include:

- Improving and updating context analyses, linked to resilience strategies, to ensure that every programme DFID supports includes an assessment to the impact on resilience and the opportunities to build resilience.
- A commitment to the principle of building back better. Post-disaster, crisis and conflict reconstruction is an opportunity to embed accessibility, rather than reinforce previous discriminatory barriers.

To achieve Goal 11, the UK government should:

- Promote better coordination between donor agencies working on urban development. DFID should play a key role in ensuring there is coherence in donor support for sustainable, resilient and inclusive urbanisation.
- Work with national and local governments to stimulate relevant legal and regulatory changes that would reduce bottlenecks, improve efficiency and increase the financial viability of delivering housing and service provision for poor communities.
- Promote better access to capital and investment opportunities for housing and infrastructure that reduces poverty and works for poor and vulnerable groups, by helping to stimulate and support local financial markets (including affordable mortgage provisions).
- Explicitly recognise the need for a holistic approach to urban development, through linking between **Goal 11** and other SDGs. Outline how UK ODA supports to create inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements in order to help achieve the wider agenda. This includes the need to:
 - Ensure city-wide planning addresses all issues from jobs to climate resilience, transport, education and housing. Embed cross-cutting issues such as gender and accessibility in all plans.
 - Expand the current commitment that all education infrastructure DFID directly funds meets accessibility standards to ensuring that it covers indirectly funded education infrastructure (see **Goal 4**).
 - Include universal design and accessibility as core principles in all development. For example, ensure that the planned efforts to improve healthcare infrastructure are fully accessible, including to people with physical and sensorial disabilities (see **Goal 3**).

This chapter is part of Bond’s report, **The UK’s global contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals**.

Access the rest of the report at bond.org.uk/UK-global-contribution-SDGs

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14. https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf
 15. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67489/hum-emer-resp-rev-uk-gvmt-resp.pdf; and <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/report/resilience/>