Inclusion – A principle for lifelong learning and sustainable cities
Background paper

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Contents

1. Objectives of the conference background paper

-   This background document will be shared in advance with all participants. As a basis for discussion and debate during the conference, it provides the following:

    -   A concise exploration of key concepts related to the theme of the conference;
    -   An acknowledgement of the diversity of people who may be defined as vulnerable;
    -   Identification of some of the cross-cutting issues that confront vulnerable groups;
    -   A presentation of the contextual factors, policies and practices that shape learning city development and the numerous challenges cities face in developing inclusive programming for the four vulnerable groups (youth-at-risk, migrants, digitally excluded populations and persons with disabilities);
    -   a summary of key findings and gaps.

-   During the conference, the content of this document will be enriched by experiences and information shared by participants.
-   With extensive revisions and additions following the conclusion of the conference, including the formulation of recommendations for the inclusion of vulnerable people in cities, the document will be developed into a publication.

2. Introduction: The case for inclusion in learning cities

Over half of humanity – 4.2 billion people – lives in cities, and this is predicted to grow to 5.2 billion by 2030.[1] Cities are growing in size partly because of their increasing attraction to people of all ages, who come from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds in search of better lives, greater safety, basic services, and decent work. Cities around the world are facing acute challenges in managing rapid urbanization – from ensuring adequate housing and infrastructure to supporting the well-being of growing vulnerable populations that include migrants, youth at risk, digitally excluded populations and persons with disabilities, among others. These challenges need to be tackled across all parts of the city, including slums and deprived neighbourhoods, to prevent endemic inequality taking root. The environmental impact of urban sprawl represents a considerable challenge for cities and rural areas alike. Access to high-calibre, resilient infrastructures and the provision of basic services for all urban and rural dwellers are key components of development objectives, as are local economic opportunities for the creation of decent jobs and social cohesion. Yet, in order to achieve this, learning opportunities in cities must be of high quality, be inclusive of the diverse backgrounds of all learners and be offered on a continuous basis throughout life. For this to happen, learning opportunities must extend to all.

This calls for a lifelong learning approach to city development, as the concept is rooted in the integration of learning and living. Furthermore, lifelong learning is a key principle of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which calls on countries to 'ensure

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[1] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2018. *The world's cities in 2018: Data booklet.* New York, United Nations [pdf] Available at : https://www.un.org/en/events/citiesday/assets/pdf/the_worlds_cities_in_2018_data_booklet.pdf [Accessed 19 September 2019].

inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. SDG 4, with its 10 targets, calls upon governments and other stakeholders to enable people of all ages and from all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to participate fully in and benefit from quality lifelong learning opportunities.

In the Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action (2015), which sets out a shared vision for education in the context of achieving SDG 4, inclusion and equity in and through education are presented as the cornerstones of a transformative education agenda. In particular, Target 4.5 aims to eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, minorities, indigenous people and children in vulnerable situations. Target 4.a, meanwhile, focuses on providing safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all. Cities can play a significant role in the achievement of these targets by promoting inclusive lifelong learning policies and practices for all – without exception.

This background document consolidates the content of several research papers commissioned ahead of the fourth International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC), whose theme is **'Inclusion – A principle for lifelong learning and sustainable cities'**. There is already a well-established discourse on the subject, championed by *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*, adopted in 1994 by the World Conference on Special Needs Education,[2] and – 25 years later – debated during the International Forum on Inclusion and Equity in Education. The latter conference, in Cali, Colombia, from 11-13 September 2019, marked the anniversary of the World Conference and provided a platform for participants to discuss inclusive education and the capacity of schools to adequately accommodate and, indeed, embrace special educational needs.[3]

At the city level, an increasing amount of attention has been directed towards inclusion-as-accessibility, or the imperative that cities develop their physical infrastructure so that persons with disabilities can access public spaces. These two strands of discourse tell us much of what we already know about inclusive learning in cities. One of the primary aims of the ICLC – with this background document as a starting point – is to reaffirm the importance of what is already known while developing a more holistic understanding of inclusion in cities. This involves broadening inclusive education in formal schooling to inclusive learning in all modalities (formal, non-formal and informal), and expanding cities' responsibility for inclusion from the improvement of physical infrastructure to the cultivation of social inclusion across all spheres and spaces (families, communities, workplaces, libraries, museums, digital platforms and beyond).

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[2] UNESCO and Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia. 1994. *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education.* Paris, UNESCO [pdf] Available at:
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000098427 [Accessed 19 September 2019].
[3] Further information about the conference, including the conference documents, can be found at:
https://www.sdg4education2030.org/international-forum-inclusion-and-equity-education-11-13-september-2019-cali-colombia [Accessed 19 September 2019].

3. A conceptual framework for the conference

3.1. Inclusion and equity in education

UNESCO defines **inclusion in education** as a process that helps overcome barriers that limit the presence, participation and achievement of learners. **Equity** is about ensuring 'fairness'; that is, the needs of all learners have equal importance.[4]

Inclusion as an integral part of lifelong learning reaffirms each individual's right to education as upheld in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is understood as a process concerned with:

- learning how to live with and from difference;
  identifying and removing barriers through the collection, collation and evaluation of information from a wide variety of sources in order to plan improvements in policy and practice;
- placing a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement.[5]

Equity in the context of lifelong learning suggests that systems of education and institutions of learning should be fair in relation to access, providing appropriate support upon entry and creating pathways to equitable learning outcomes. Fair and equitable systems should reflect the nature of the population served.

3.2. Social inclusion and inclusive education

Social inclusion can be defined as 'the process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities – that everyone, regardless of their background, can achieve their full potential in life. Such efforts include policies and actions that promote equal access to (public) services as well as activities to enable citizens' participation in the decision-making processes that affect their lives'.[6] Bynner (2000) links social inclusion to other concepts and attributes: risks, protection, vulnerability and resilience. The effect of these factors on life chances are determined by a combination of individual and social factors, and are further mediated by policies at institutional and governmental level. The concept of social inclusion is now used more extensively in education to describe how individuals in certain communities may encounter multiple forms of deprivation based on one or more characteristics.

It is also important to distinguish between **inclusion in education** and **inclusive education** (Gale, 2020). Inclusion in education refers to making existing provision more accessible to those who have been excluded, whereas a system of inclusive education is responsive and adaptive to the

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[4] UNESCO. 2017. *A guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education.* Paris, UNESCO [pdf] Available at: unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000248254 [Accessed 19 September 2019].
[5] International Bureau of Education-UNESCO. 2016. *Training tools for curriculum development. Reaching out to all learners: A resource pack for supporting inclusive education.* Geneva, IBE-UNESCO.
[6] The Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), in collaboration with UNESCO and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), held an Expert Group Meeting on 'Creating an inclusive society: Practical strategies to promote social integration' at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France, from 10–13 September 2007.

excluded. As a component of lifelong learning, inclusive education encourages an 'active role and the participation of the learners themselves, their families and their communities'.[7] By adopting a holistic approach, inclusive education aims to 'strengthen the links between schools and society to enable families and the communities to participate in and contribute to the educational process'.[8] In order to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children, youth and adults, inclusive education proposes 'to develop coordinated efforts to tackle the factors that have put these groups in situations of vulnerability and to enhance the factors that support them, across all aspects of their lives, and across their life spans, from conception through to adulthood'.[9]

Most inclusion models largely focus on the degree to which the formal education system (schools, colleges and universities) responds to demands and needs of citizens. **Inclusive education in the context of formal schooling** involves flexibility in teaching style and in the way in which the curriculum is mediated. It is a student-centred approach that also allows the teacher to adapt his or her methods – both of instruction and classroom management – in order to respond to students' different capabilities and needs. This approach provides opportunities for schools to become learning organizations, enabling them to find creative solutions to challenges related to the full diversity of students' abilities. Supporting schools to act in this way is a major policy issue that may require reforms that relinquish some centralized control over the curriculum and school organization, allowing a sense of agency and ownership on the part of individual teachers and administrators to translate inclusive values into action.[10]

Alternative conceptions of inclusive education focus on citizens learning and working outside of formal institutions. This may be manifest through **non-formal learning** or **self-directed learning**, in which citizen groups actively (co)-construct their own learning provision, with or without institutional collaboration. For example, Kane (2012) provides a useful overview of some of the many forms of **popular education** in Latin America – inspired by great Latin American thinkers of education and pedagogy, such as Paulo Freire – that are associated with social movements. Some of these movements have developed extensive and highly organized educational provision with varying degrees of support from the state. Examples include the Universidad Campesina (Peasants University), whose ethos is formulated on the empowerment of the poor and the marginalized.

In the case of the work of the Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) organization based in India, inclusive education involves **participatory methods**, which recognise the knowledge of individuals and organizations and uses it to transform relationships between the excluded poor and those in positions of power and authority.[11] A good example is seen in the collaborative efforts of civil society – in this case the urban poor – and the municipalities of Ajmer, Jhansi and Muzaffarpur to achieve SDG 6, ('Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all').[12] These alternative concepts, which acknowledge non-formal and informal learning and cross-sectoral partnerships, complement inclusive approaches to formal education in the creation of a holistically inclusive lifelong learning system.

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[7] UNESCO-International Bureau of Education. 2009. *48th International Conference of Education. 'Inclusive education: The way of the future'.* Geneva, Switzerland, 25-28 November 2008. Paris, UNESCO.
[8] ibid.
[9] Ainscow, M. 2016. Diversity and equity: A global education challenge. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies,* 51(2), pp. 143–155.
[10] UNESCO and Leonard Cheshire Disability (UK). 2019. Inclusive education for persons with disabilities –Are we making progress? Background paper. *International forum on inclusion and equity in education: Every learner matters.* Cali, Colombia, 11–13 September 2019. Paris, UNESCO.
[11] See http://pria.org
[12] See https://www.pria.org/featuredstory-establishing-partnerships-between-civil-society-and-municipalities-to-achieve-sdgs-44-206 [Accessed 15 July 2019].

3.3. Lifelong learning and learning cities

Traditionally, the learning life course was understood as comprising two distinct parts: a period of formal preparation followed by a period of implementation and eventual disengagement (Lengrand, 1970). By contrast, the concept of **lifelong learning** recognizes a need for people to continue learning throughout their lives, from cradle to grave, and focuses attention on all of the diverse settings and modes in which people learn, including informal and non-formal – in other words, as well as being lifelong, learning is also recognized as being life-wide. UNESCO describes lifelong learning as being:

> rooted in the integration of learning and living, covering learning activities for people of all ages (children, young people, adults and elderly, girls and boys, women and men) in all life-wide contexts (family, school, community, workplace and so on) and through a variety of modalities (formal, non-formal and informal) which together meet a wide range of learning needs and demands.[13]

Learning cities facilitate lifelong learning for all, whatever their cultural composition and social, political and economic structures. They also help to realize the universal right to education, promote education for sustainable development, establish flexible learning pathways and support skills development for employment. The learning cities concept is a people-centred and learning-focused approach, which provides a collaborative, action-orientated framework for working on the diverse challenges that cities increasingly face. Learning cities put people in the centre of development. By promoting education and lifelong learning for all, they facilitate individual empowerment and social cohesion, economic and cultural prosperity and sustainability.

In keeping with a lifelong learning perspective, city-based initiatives geared towards inclusion are more likely to be comprehensive and effective if supported by **participatory cross-sectoral governance**, which refers to co-ordination and decision-making systems for defining strategic goals and developing and implementing policies. These policies are produced by collaborative groups of stakeholders from local government authorities working in partnership with non-state actors, such as civil society organizations and the private sector. Participatory cross-sectoral governance in an urban setting should further be gender-responsive and facilitate the inclusion and participation of youth and minorities. This requires the empowerment of women and minorities in local leadership and public affairs to ensure a stronger representation of their priorities in decision-making processes. A continuous and structured dialogue, as well as platforms for consultations between local institutions and non-state actors, are valuable tools in achieving long-term **civil empowerment**. In any sustainable learning city, participatory cross-sectoral governance and civil empowerment are integral to inclusive lifelong learning.

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[13] UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). n.d. Technical Note: Lifelong Learning. Hamburg, UIL [pdf]
Available at: http://uil.unesco.org/fileadmin/keydocuments/LifelongLearning/en/UNESCOTechNotesLLL.pdf
[Accessed 19 September 2019].

4. Data sources for the topic of inclusion in cities

International learning surveys constitute a category of data sources for inclusion in learning cities. The best-known examples are the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills (ALL) survey, which was used between 2003–2007, after IALs and prior to PIAAC (OECD, 2013). These are relevant resources in as much as they are well-validated instruments that map participation rates in all forms of adult learning and can monitor skills levels over time. Surveys such as PIAAC are comprehensive, and give us national-level data on certain dimensions of a learning city. In addition, there are other measures that can be used both at an individual level and institutionally, and other forms of surveys that are used in many learning cities. For example, in Beijing, specialized research centres, institutions and strategies have been developed to monitor progress in a systematic way. The Beijing Municipal Commission of Education has established a group of experts to develop the Beijing Evaluation Index to monitor the city's performance, drawing its inspiration from UNESCO's *Key Features of Learning Cities* (UNESCO, 2015), but making modifications to suit the city's specific circumstances.[14]

The OECD's annual *Education at a glance*: OECD indicators is the most comprehensive **national-level** comparison for UNESCO Member States and associated countries. The publication comprises measures on social outcomes of education, enrolment rates, adult participation in education and learning (formal and non-formal sectors), decision-making distribution and accountability by level of government, among other indicators. Furthermore, the OECD collaborates with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and the SDG 4 Steering Committee to work towards building a comprehensive data system for the SDG 4 global indicators for OECD member and partner countries (OECD, 2018, p. 15). In some particular cases, the OECD uses information from PIAAC (see OECD, 2013), which assesses skills in the three cognitive domains of literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments, and the Adult Education Survey (2016). For some countries, therefore, there is reliable and good-quality data, although it is not always comprehensive in all domains.

However, **little attention has been given to fine-grained analysis at the city level in such surveys**. One way of undertaking data analysis at the city level is to use indexes and rankings based on secondary analysis of existing data, typically to provide some idea of current performance and comparison with other cities (Tibbitt, 2018). Among the approaches that have sought to analyse existing datasets have been the Canadian Composite Learning Index (CCLI) (Cappon and Laughlin, 2013), an approach later taken up in Europe by the European Lifelong Learning Index (ELLI) developed by the Bertelsmann Foundation in Germany (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2010). The CCLI and ELLI were both loosely based on UNESCO's four pillars of learning as laid out by Delors (1996): learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be.

The particular utility of CCLI in the context of learning city development is that is has been able to analyse data at the community level (and, in the Canadian context, has been able to assess lifelong learning in 4,500 communities) and has done so longitudinally, with repeated measures to determine the extent of change. The CCLI was able to inform the development of learning city initiatives such as the Community Foundational-Learning Plan of Edmonton in the Canadian State of Alberta (City of Edmonton, 2013). Similarly, ELLI has been able to make comparisons of countries and regions in Europe and has been systematically assessed by Saisana (2010, p. 43) to have 'the quality features to be used as material for the analysis of lifelong learning in the European Union countries'.

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[14] See also a report on creating a more operable learning city index for China at
http://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities/more-operable-learning-city-index-china.
In addition to Beijing, other major Chinese cities, including Shanghai, have been involved in discussions.

Hence, there is the basis for assessing various measures of progress against the template of UNESCO's *Key Features of Learning Cities* and, in some particular cases, measurement instruments are being utilized. However, the process is far from systematic, and while it might be possible to agree on measures for social inclusion (based on demographics suitably benchmarked to local conditions), it might be more difficult to determine what a socially inclusive learning city (based on the elements of UIL's fundamental conditions) might be. Furthermore, **when it comes to collecting new information about policies and practices for inclusion and lifelong learning in cities, data sources are limited.**

Taking as an example the group of at-risk youth that is afforded the highest level of attention by international bodies, governments and policy-makers – i.e. those 'not in education, employment or training (NEETs) – there is a surprising lack of robust evaluations or research on programmes and policy effectiveness related to supporting this group. Highlighting this lack of information, Eurofound called for more research; specifically, the documentation of qualitative approaches 'to build up the evidence base on process-related aspects of delivery and experiences of progression along employability pathways' (Eurofound, 2015, p. 56). In addition to the lack of evidence on programme and policy impact or effectiveness, little research has been carried out concerning the underlying reasons that keep young people out of education, training and employment. As a consequence, the root causes of young people's exclusion do not seem to be properly tackled by the measures implemented in many cases.

More research into inclusive policies and practices in cities is required because there is an important distinction to be made between national and city levels. While they shoulder the responsibility of implementing national policies and initiatives at the local level, cities can also set their own course in response to the unique needs of their inhabitants. In fact, it has been proven – in a reversal to the traditional notion of centralized policy-making – that innovations originating from decentralized processes in cities can both respond to the needs of local people and have a wider, potentially nationwide, impact. This was the case for the enrolment in pre-school of children of migrants with irregular status in Italy where, following a 2009 piece of national legislation, a residence permit was required to access a range of services including non-compulsory education services. In spite of this, the City of Turin, followed soon by Florence and Genoa, decided that the rule should not be applied in the kindergartens managed by the municipalities. An ensuing debate prompted the national government to issue a circular in 2010 clarifying that the residence permit was not required to register children in public nursery schools (UNESCO, 2018).

Cities have the power and autonomy to leverage change at the national level, particularly when policies and practices are well documented and made available to a wider audience; increased levels of data acquisition and knowledge sharing will facilitate this.

5. Cross-cutting vulnerabilities and issues and the identification of groups

When discussing and analysing the inclusion of vulnerable people in cities, it is necessary to address how and why 'vulnerable groups' are identified. In this context, **'vulnerable' denotes a risk of exclusion from learning opportunities**, and the people to whom this statement applies are many and diverse. Attempts to pinpoint clearly defined groups are problematic: because exclusion is so multifaceted, even an exhaustive list of groups is likely to overlook someone. It is, however, necessary to do so in order to organize discussions around concrete policies and practices aimed at addressing a particular issue that applies to significant numbers of people. In this paper, most of the examples apply to four vulnerable groups: **youth at risk (including NEETs), migrants, digitally excluded populations, and persons with disabilities.** Nevertheless, there are many other groups that can be identified, including but not limited to the homeless, elderly people and imprisoned populations. All of these groups, as well as others not listed here, deserve as much attention as the groups featured in this document; the four groups selected serve as a starting point.

It is also vital that, when talking of 'vulnerable groups', there is recognition of **the potential for the same person to be affected by different forms of exclusion.** It is possible for an individual to be both a migrant and a young person at risk, or a digitally excluded person with disabilities. **Lifelong learning policies and practices can simultaneously respond to the needs of different groups, which in reality often overlap.** For example, in Vienna, Austria, the Youth College (Jugendcollege) of the 'Start Vienna' integration initiative provides services for migrants who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). The initiative was developed in 2015 with the involvement of the Department for Integration and Diversity of the city along with numerous educational institutions and funding agencies. Started in 2016, the programme provides free education, training and mentoring to young asylum seekers and refugees aged between 15 and 21 mainly from Afghanistan, Syria and Somalia for a maximum duration of nine months. Math, English, information and communication technology (ICT) and the German language are some of the core modules to allow young people to leave the college with a compulsory school-leaving certificate. In addition, a compulsory module on 'critical participation' teaches topics to foster peaceful social and political coexistence in Austria. The Youth College 'enrolment' is based on attendance of 1-2 day assessment, during which potential leaners' knowledge and motivation are assessed. Since it started, 1,270 young migrants have participated in the initiative, with 160 having completed it and entered further training or employment.

Definitions of vulnerable groups are all based on contextual factors – such as age, employment status and educational background – but there are other contextual factors that may cut across groups, such as gender, ethnicity and geographical location. **Exclusion is more pronounced in slums and deprived areas, where vulnerabilities may be exacerbated by a sense of neglect and isolation, and vulnerable groups are often located in some of the least developed areas of cities.** Lifelong learning initiatives centred on community engagement, which strengthen social bonds and encourage more widespread learning participation in poorer neighbourhoods, can very effectively promote inclusion. For example, in Rosario, Argentina, the El Obrador Cultural Center aims to make culture more accessible to the local community, home to increasing numbers of irregular migrants. By promoting their rights and fostering cultural diversity and identities, the programme attempts to offer a better quality of life for the population.

The synergetic bond between community and learning is also the bedrock of the **Learning Neighbourhoods project in Cork City, Ireland**, which adopts 'a community development approach to build trust, embeddedness and community ownership of the project' (O'Sullivan et al., 2017, p. 534). The working definition of a Cork 'learning neighbourhood' is one that 'has an ongoing commitment to learning, providing inclusive and diverse learning opportunities for whole communities through partnership and collaboration' (O'Sullivan et al., 2016, p. 2). Learning neighbourhoods conceptually draw on community-building ideas. They are about the essential symbiosis between reflection, learning and community development and also about denizens having both the capacity and opportunity to be involved in shaping sustainable futures by translating global agendas into local initiatives.

6. Youth at risk (NEETs)

The term **NEET – not in education, employment or training** – first emerged in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the late 1980s, but was not formally introduced at the policy level until 1999, when the government published its *Bridging the gap: New opportunities for 16–18 year olds not in education, training or employment* report (SEU, 1999). By the beginning of the millennium, similar concepts referring to disengaged or excluded youth had been adopted in almost all EU member states as well as in Japan, New Zealand, the Taiwan Province of China, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China and, more recently, the People's Republic of China. The use of NEET as a term and/or category has been criticized for being too heterogeneous or, in some instances, for being used to stigmatize (Maguire, 2015; Gardner et al., 2017). As a consequence of the lack of an internationally recognized definition of NEET, the characteristics of the youth classified as 'NEET' differ greatly from country to country, making cross-country comparisons difficult, even at the regional level (Bardak et al., 2015; Mascherini, 2017).

For the purpose of monitoring the NEET indicator 8.6.1 for SDG Target 8.6 ('promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all'), the data is analysed disaggregated by sex and education level according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). It distinguishes two different sub-groups: **unemployed youth not in education or training** and **youth outside the labour force not in education or training** (ILO, 2016; UIS, 2016). The NEET indicator produced by Eurostats for the EU member states covers nine different age groups and is disaggregated by sex, labour market status (unemployed, inactive) and education level (at least lower-secondary attainment/at most upper-secondary attainment).

The identification of risk factors and reasons of vulnerability as well as of specific sub-groups are necessary steps to define the policy response to address the NEET challenge. While descriptive indicators and statistics are essential and insightful, more in-depth analysis is required to understand the characteristics and factors that put young people at risk of becoming NEETs. Moreover, given the huge diversity that exists within the NEET group and the different realities faced by them, it is necessary to identify specific sub-groups in more detail. This breakdown of the NEET population into specific sub-groups needs to be operationalized for each country context, including at the sub-national and local levels. Analysing the particular composition of the

NEET population and the degree of vulnerability (risk levels) is very important within a particular context to understand the specific needs and address them with targeted policies, strategies and programme interventions.

Identifying the **reasons for youth vulnerability** (why an individual is out of school, training and/or work) is the first step in allowing policy-makers to understand different NEET groups and eventually come up with targeted policy interventions. Identifying the main determinants for being a NEET is also important for prevention and/or early policy intervention. There is a heterogeneity of risk factors – social, economical, cultural and individual – that are predictors of the likelihood for a young person to become a NEET. Family and migration background can play an important role, as can other factors, such as disability, ethnicity, geographic location and/or gender. Usually the NEET status arises from a complex interplay of different factors.

6.1. Policies and practices for the inclusion of youth at risk (NEETs) in cities

A key distinction should be made between **policies and practices that seek to prevent young people from becoming NEETs** and those that seek to **re-engage young people and support them in their transition out of the NEET status.** The European Training Foundation (ETF) differentiates policy responses towards NEETs as 'prevention policies' (preventing early school leaving and facilitating the smooth transition from school to work), 'reintegration policies' (supporting young people re-entering the educational system or the labour market), and 'compensation policies' (social assistance measures as the last resort in alleviating exclusion) (Bardak, 2015, p. 51). In any case, in practice, these different kinds of policies and programmes are often overlapping and combined into a holistic set of measures.

An example of a holistic approach to school-to-work transition policies is found in the **City of York, UK**, which has developed a specific Participation and NEET Reduction Plan 2015–2017 (City of York, 2016). This plan includes seven key priorities with specifications of how they are planned to be implemented and how achievements will be measured (targets). The plan also stipulates duties on local authorities, in particular schools, colleges and other training providers. It analyses available data for NEETs aged 16 to 18 years, establishes reporting, accountability and alignment mechanisms with key stakeholders, and formulates five outcomes that the City of York aspires for young people, which are aligned with the City of York Children and Young People's Plan and Strategy,[15] City of York's Equality Strategy 2016–2020,[16] and York's Skills Plan 2017–2020.[17] The Participation and NEET Reduction Plan 2015–2017 also comprises a risk assessment and planned actions to be taken with the aim of reducing, eliminating or accepting risk factors that may hamper the implementation of the Plan (ibid.).

The BladeRunners model of the **City of Vancouver** is considered to be one of the most successful programmes in **Canada** to support transition to employment of disadvantaged youth (OECD LEED, 2013). BladeRunners was conceived in downtown Vancouver in 1994 and a unique system of '24/7 support'[18] for employment-related issues was subsequently developed. Since then, the programme has expanded to more than 20 other communities in the province of British Columbia. The original Vancouver site offers the following services to disadvantaged youth (aged 15-30): building and recognizing skills, job retention and progression, and work-based learning. The ultimate goal of the programme is to develop skills and work experience that foster long-term attachment to the labour force and the social integration of young people with multiple barriers.

The programme instruments include an initial assessment, training, placement on construction sites, and support from programme co-ordinators, which is a key defining feature of the model. The model has a strong partnership element and its transition to a public-private partnership (PPP) approach in 2003 has further increased the importance of the private sector (construction and other industries) support, which is vital to the success of the programme (ibid.). With an 88 per cent job placement rate, 32 per cent female participation rate, and 66 per cent participation of indigenous people, BladeRunners is helping diverse youth to become valued contributing citizens of the local communities.[19]

Outreach can prove effective at engaging NEETs and may be delivered in a specific, separate site, for example a 'one-stop shop' or youth centre. Alternatively, it may be delivered through a detached model involving mobile and community services. Internet, social media and smart phone services are also used increasingly to raise the profile and offer an online and publicity model of outreach. Mobile outreach on the streets is effective at breaking down barriers and perceptions NEETs may have of public employment services (PES), build up mutual trust and start the process of (re) engagement.

An example of community-based outreach work is the 'one-stop shop' approach in **two communities in Costa Rica, Desamparados and Upala**, which is part of a strategy to raise the profile of youth employment services. The programme, targeting young people aged 15 to 35 in vulnerable situations, with a particular focus on women, was designed to address the following challenges faced by young Costa Ricans looking for work: (1) lack of structured information on education and work opportunities, (2) insufficient education and training, and (3) weak public policies on unemployment. One of the lessons learned was that the planning processes must involve all participating stakeholders. In this case, the local governments were not involved as priority partners when the programme was set up, which led to difficulties in incorporating their needs, responsibilities and ability to respond. Ownership and the leadership capabilities of local stakeholders must be fostered, since these are the people who will drive the project's progress. It is important to ensure that the concept of one-stop shop is fully integrated into the planning, the organic structure and the regular municipal budget on a permanent basis.[20]

A number of programmes aim at enhancing young people's employability and productivity by delivering vocational education and training programmes, or by providing work experience. For example, **Ghana**'s Youth Inclusive Entrepreneurial Development Initiative for Employment (YIEDIE), a private sector programme in the cities of **Accra** and **Takoradi**, operates on the weekends (16 training sessions for eight weeks) and targets youth aged 15 to 35 who want to build their soft skills to become more employable in the construction industry. In Takoradi, the programme works with the local government assembly to support the programme and attract applicants. It includes components of skills and development training, entrepreneurial training, and apprenticeships. The annual intake is 1,600 young people. Sources of funding are the MasterCard Foundation and the Youth Forward initiative. As with a number of private sector initiatives for youth employment in Ghana, participants are charged fees (Avura et al., 2016).

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[20] https://www.sdgfund.org/case-study/youth-employment-and-migration-costa-rica

6.2. Key challenges for the inclusion of youth at risk (NEETs) in cities

Most of the issues or challenges made explicit in the examined literature are related to weak information (data) on NEETs, and to governance and implementation. Little mention of issues can be found with regard to the design of policy, strategy and programme responses. A major issue can be identified around **distinguishing, reaching out to, and tracking NEETs**. If the available data is not disaggregated by specific features that mark vulnerabilities, it will be difficult to adequately identify risk factors and sub-groups, a precondition for targeted interventions. Available data often do not permit an evaluation of whether becoming NEET is voluntary or not, or of situating a (potential) NEET at a specific stage on his/her pathway from education to work. There are important knowledge gaps regarding the needs and expectations of NEETs.

Furthermore, strong education, training and labour market **information and analysis systems, which cover the non-formal and informal sectors and qualitative job aspects, are often lacking** to inform policy, set targets, and evaluate impacts. Where such information systems exist, they are only used in isolation: data are not cross-referenced to better understand disparities, vulnerabilities, and what works best. The absence of formal evaluation or the lack of measurable targets (and baseline information) in many of the analysed experiences is impeding informed policy-making. The effectiveness of policy measures and their impact is rarely systematically assessed, also by using longitudinal approaches. Lacking documentation, monitoring and evaluation of youth programmes was identified as a major weakness and makes the objective assessment of the cities' performance in youth development nearly impossible.

Although cities, municipalities and local governments may have youth policies in place, they often **do not address the particular vulnerabilities of NEETs**, and there are **challenges with regard to implementation**. Policies are not backed by implementation plans, adequate resources and capacities, and are often unknown to the responsible officers. Institutional capacities to provide youth programmes are often challenged by unclear objectives, lack of targets, narrow focus and insufficient capacitation of the involved personnel. It was found that despite the impressive work performed by dedicated youth representatives, their role is often undermined. The need for professionalization, awareness and training on youth matters on all levels was articulated as an urgent issue.

Lack of clarity in responsibilities, a lack of overarching vision, a narrow mandate or target group, working in silos, limited capacities for co-ordination and the absence of effective accountability mechanisms often makes implementation difficult. Outreach strategies and approaches to promote active inclusion of young people have been reported to be inadequate and failing to reach the most vulnerable and at-risk youth. Ensuring a better gender balance in policy responses and overcoming gender-based barriers were also identified as challenges. When implementing national programmes and policies for young people at the local level, authorities are often facing lack of flexibility, limited duration of such initiatives, and budget cuts and financial constraints. **Securing sustainable funding** is viewed as one of the most significant challenges by local governments and providers, in particular non-governmental organizations. The need to continuously adapt to local labour market developments poses another challenge to many providers of youth programmes.

There is also a need for **policy frameworks to facilitate transitions from the informal to the formal economy**. Such frameworks have already been developed in parts of Latin America and are based on the understanding that interventions are more effective when address the diversity and scale of the informal economy with a comprehensive set of instruments. Such an integrated strategy should

(1) promote access to a quality first-job experience (as in Brazil, Jamaica and Uruguay), (2) ensure proper formalization (as in Colombia and Paraguay), and (3) promote formal entrepreneurship (as in Chile and Mexico) (ILO, 2017).

7. Migrants

In an era of profound demographic, socio-economic and technological changes, **migration and forced displacement** are top policy concerns. People move across or within countries for different reasons. Besides economic factors (either internal or international), irregular migration and forced displacement related to crisis, armed conflicts and natural disasters have increased in intensity. The people engaged in such journeys often live at the margin of societies, start a never-ending trip and are very vulnerable to the risk of exclusion and segregation in many areas, including education. Responding to the educational needs of people with migrant backgrounds and newcomers involves many actors creating a complex set of interactions and responsibilities – even more so at the level of the cities, which represent the final destinations for most migrants and forcibly displaced people. In this respect, the Incheon Declaration recognized that progress at the local level is needed, and called for 'robust partnerships at the local, regional, national and international levels' to realize lifelong learning for all' (UNESCO, 2015). How migrants and refugees integrate into urban communities varies from city to city depending on many factors, but typically on the capacity of cities to decide which actions should be implemented, how to implement them and on the funding available.

Integration of people with migrant backgrounds and those forcibly displaced in society and in education is important as it recognizes the need to 'integrate to the different' (Poon-McBrayer, 2012). 'Integration' accepts or integrates parts of the culture of the newcomers into the host system to increase tolerance and respect. Currently, however, it is still the individual with diverse needs who is asked to adapt to an existing system. By contrast, **inclusion respects the rights and responds to the needs of all those who are part of it by creating a space where diversity is celebrated and valued**. Addressing diversity thus calls for inclusion.

Similar to the concepts of integration and inclusion, a misunderstanding often emerges with respect to the terms 'multicultural' and 'intercultural', often used without distinction in the description of national education policies. However, based on UNESCO's *Guidelines for Intercultural Education*, 'multicultural education uses learning about other cultures … to produce acceptance', while intercultural education reflects the aspiration to find a 'way of living together in multicultural societies through … understanding of, respect for and dialogue between the different cultural groups' (UNESCO, 2006). Multiculturalism can be associated with integration denoting a two-way process requiring some adjustments by both parties, i.e. the newcomers and the local residents or the cultural minority and the cultural majorities. **Interculturalism, on the other hand, emphasizes both integration and social inclusion.** It fosters knowledge of other cultures, but is also concerned with the structural inequalities faced often by members of minority groups and involves taking steps to eliminate systematic educational disadvantage (Barret, 2013). Diversity becomes the norm and not a special situation (Santerini, 2010).

7.1. Policies and practices for the inclusion of migrants in cities

The **City of Hamburg, Germany**, started a pilot project, 'I am a Hamburger!', which provides people with migrant backgrounds (and especially from the Turkish community) with information, guidance and education on how to go through the naturalization process. So far, project has advised and helped around 2,700 people interested in naturalization. In addition, more than 10,000 people were informed about the campaign over the course of more than 200. The German cities of Hannover and Kassel have since started pilot projects inspired by the model, while the city of Hamm has set up a central service point to advise migrants (Wegweiser-Kommune, 2019). To prevent discrimination and fight racism and xenophobia, many German cities have put in place a number of initiatives, including the hiring of local ombudsmen, education programmes, human rights offices, and campaigns against hate speech.

Financial resources for the integration of migrants and refugees can represent a challenge especially in low-income settings. In some countries, cities have set aside special funds to support education of the most vulnerable migrants such as undocumented or unaccompanied minors. For example, the city of **Sint-Niklaas, Belgium** has set up a solidarity fund to which all schools, private and public, contribute to fund education projects for undocumented pupils (PICUM, 2008).

Language is essential for the integration of migrants. In **The Hague, Netherlands**, local authorities organize welcome classes for asylum seekers (not yet granted the status of refugee), which usually take place in or near asylum centres. Children who do not speak Dutch are first given language classes and then gradually introduced to other subjects. After a maximum of two years, children are mainstreamed into the regular education system. Similarly, in **Oslo, Norway**, children are offered initial welcoming classes before being mainstreamed into national education. The duration of classes varies from a few months to up to two years (Eurocities, 2017). In Oslo, refugees aged 16 and over are obligated to complete at least 600 hours of language training. Those with special needs can receive up to 3,000 hours' training

Meanwhile, in São Paulo, Brazil, the programme Portas Abertas: Português para Imigrantes (Open Doors: Portuguese for Migrants) has provided language instruction to migrants as a structured public policy since 2017. It resulted from a partnership between the city's Municipal Secretariat for Human Rights and Citizenship and the Municipal Secretariat of Education and offered 600 places for migrants in 10 different municipal schools during its first semester.

Education about diversity and multiculturalism is increasingly a priority of cities and fosters connections between their inhabitants. Cities are investing in this type of education to change attitudes and promote openness and diversity. **Amman, Jordan**, gave refuge to more than 400,000 Syrians in 2016, and nearly 30 per cent of its inhabitants report to be foreign-born. One of its districts, Badr Nazzal, uses a series of micro-initiatives, set up with international donors and local partners, to fight against spatial segregation and connect host and refugee communities. One such initiative was the rehabilitation of local parks with an aim for them to become 'spaces of encounter' between Syrian refugees and Jordanian citizens (Hofer 2017[21]). The second initiative provided football training courses for children aged 8–12 from both the host and refugee communities. Despite their usefulness, financial and temporal limitations of the project prevented their scalability. Their inclusion into a longer-term sustainable programme supported with adequate financing would have been more fruitful.

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[21] https://www.uclg-cisdp.org/sites/default/files/MC2CM_Amman_EN.pdf

7.2. Key challenges for the inclusion of migrants in cities

Vulnerable migrant populations in cities in both low- and high-income countries suffer from poor access to basic services – such as education, housing and transport – which fosters disillusion, discontent and sometimes violence. Education can play a crucial role in tackling inequality and discrimination in urban areas; however, **city governments often have limited power in education matters**. It is therefore essential that integrated policy-making occurs at the subnational level to address the needs of migrants and forcibly displaced people.

Cities face great challenges in addressing migration through urban planning and development initiatives. **Lack of human and financial resources and poor co-ordination hinder changes to progress.** Planning for the integration of people from migrant backgrounds and the forcibly displaced implies **adopting holistic approaches favouring inclusion over marginalization and segregation**. This means thinking ahead about ways to overcome the full range of barriers preventing migrants and the forcibly displaced from contributing fully to the urban economy and system. Responding to their integration needs at the local level fosters opportunities for economic growth for the whole economy while reducing tensions and conflicts across groups.

As municipalities are at the forefront of the reception and inclusion of migrants and refugees, they need to develop their expertise to face such issues and the central government has a responsibility to support their efforts. However, because of the lack of coordination between central and sub-national levels, often the **cities take the lead in creating initiatives and partnerships with other stakeholders**. This creates the need for NGOs and humanitarian agencies to coordinate with the local authorities and other national departments to make sure the voices of migrants and of the forcibly displaced are heard on the design and delivery of services. It is therefore essential to establish a dialogue with them to bring information on their needs to the knowledge of local authorities.

It is fundamental to invest in **data collection to show where the needs are most felt to access basic services and education in particular. Investment in the provision of access to quality education that is nonviolent and culturally sensitive is key**, as are inclusive learning environments for migrants and refugees of all ages. These include age-appropriate language classes, diversity campaigns in schools for both migrant and non-migrant populations, vocational training. and opportunities to foster contacts between different groups. The management of diversity and the creation of the conditions necessary to build sustainable and inclusive societies should become a concern for all.

8. Digitally excluded populations

Digital literacy is defined by the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (UNESCO-IITE) as comprising 'a set of basic skills which include the use and production of digital media, information processing and retrieval, participation in social networks for creation and sharing of knowledge, and a wide range of professional computing skills' (2011, p. 2). In recent years, however, new modes of digital data (e.g. novel visualizations and infographics) have emerged. This shift called for more attention to be paid to the importance of digital and data literacy, including developing understandings of digital spreadsheets, open-source coding and data that supports digital platforms. Despite growing interest in data literacy, the concept is not as well operationalized as digital literacy and, in the case of city-level applications, it remains to be fully explored and embedded in digitally open governance policy and citizen-led urban practices.

However defined, digital and data literacies are embedded within wider social and educational inequalities. **The relationship between social and digital inclusion is evident in debates about the digital divide.** Although these debates are rooted in the early mainstreaming of the internet and the world wide web, some of the key points raised are relevant in addressing the current challenges about both digital and data literacies. As early as 2001, Castells (2001) identified risks in the ways in which people can be socially excluded through not being able to participate digitally. He argued that differing levels of access to, and usage of, digital services 'add a fundamental cleavage to existing sources of inequality and social exclusion in a complex interaction' (ibid., p. 247). In other words, inclusion is not just about having access to digital technologies, but about having the skills, education and sensibilities to participate in social, economic, political as well as cultural life (Wessels, 2015; Alsheikh et al., 2011). Access to social, digital and educational resources is shaped by specific global, national, regional and local contexts (Norris, 2000; Ragnedda et al., 2015). This means that, if people have unequal levels of opportunity to develop digital and data skills, they are less able to participate in democratic processes and enter labour markets.

The **digital divide**, understood as non- or limited access to digital environments, is perhaps decreasing, at least in some countries; however, this marked progress should be carefully evaluated and weighed against other emerging and more subtle forms of divides. Digital and data literacies continue to have concerning socio-demographic trends of exclusion. What makes the implementation of new digital solutions more challenging are persistent and multiple digital dividing lines across different socio-demographic groups. Access to digital and data literacies is limited in countries with lower GDP (Rashid, 2016) and for the most vulnerable in society, such as adults in urban areas of deprivation (Lido et al., 2016) – as in the case of the Colombian 'AdulTICoProgram' (UNESCO 2017[22]) - individuals with mental-health issues (Robotham et al., 2016), non-native English speakers (Deen-Swarray, 2016), as well as citizens facing poverty and global conflict (UNESCO, 2011). The Australian Digital Inclusion Index notes the paradox of the three main barriers – financial nature/affordability, skills and access – in contrast to the tangible financial and quality-of-life benefits of such digital engagement (Thomas, 2017). Significant digital divides emerge from within digital environments where inadequate preparation or access to information, digital know-how and critical engagement with different platforms can lead to differentiated experiences of the digital. The data literacy divides seem even more problematic when adding the needs of data-science and data-literate jobs rising with emerging technology. Without widening access and participation of such skills to the under-represented learners described above, open data science agendas risk reproducing inequalities both inside and outside formal educational settings.

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[22] https://en.unesco.org/news/reducing-digital-gap-senior-citizens-colombia

8.1. Policies and practices for the inclusion of digitally excluded populations in cities

The education team at the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science in the Arab States (UNESCO Cairo Office) initiated a pilot project in the Giza Governorate with the support of the Ministry of Education and Technical Education in Egypt, the Adult Education Authority, the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education, and other concerned national partners. The project focussed on advancing girls' and women's literacy in the **Giza Governorate, Egypt**. With an innovative technology-enabled approach, the programme was developed in two phases: the first phase (March 2017 to November 2018) was funded by Microsoft and targeted 443 female participants; the second phase (February–October 2019) was funded by the Weidong Cloud Education Group of China and involved 244 girls and women. Literacy skills were embedded into an integrated curriculum (Al Mar'ah Wal Hayah) or 'Women and Life', and included empowerment activities for women's social, cultural and economic growth. The methodological approach targeted not only the learning of Arabic and mathematics, but also lifelong learning through the use of an interactive cross-platform digital application and a comprehensive set of empowerment activities. Facilitators coordinated the literacy and empowerment activities in a wide range of locations, including mosques, NGOs, local health units, youth centres, schools and nurseries.

The **innovative technology-driven approach** involved women in digital learning as well as training workshops, income-generating activities (e.g. handicrafts, sewing, food production, etc.) and awareness seminars (on social traditions and violence against women, risks of early marriage, decision-making). It is important to note that the project tackled the wider national mandate to increase literacy levels, and also tested the novel concept of integrating ICT in literacy. Instead of teaching literacy skills or digital skills alone, the programme incorporated these along with life skills and creative activities which motivated girls and women to learn and make connections between their learning process and everyday life activities. With elements related to income generation, the programme had an immediate impact on reducing dropout rates and maintaining learners' interest during the learning phase, giving them incentives not only to further their knowledge, but to also see the immediate monetary effects of their enriched knowledge and new competencies. Given the high success rate of the programme (92 per cent of learners passed the Adult Education Authority (AEA) examination), current plans aim to roll and scale up the project from pilot to national phase.

In Glasgow, UK, the Digital Glasgow Strategy (2018) proposes a comprehensive action plan to achieve two main goals: the development of a competitive and innovative global digital economy and the establishment of Glasgow as 'one of the most pioneering and innovative smart cities in the world' (p. 7). The strategy recognizes the importance of digital inclusion and participation and commits to engaging citizens to decrease social and economic exclusion and to enhance the quality of everyday life. The Urban Big Data Centre (UBDC) is jointly funded by Glasgow University and the Economic and Social Research Council (UK) as part of the UK's drive to harness the power of novel data emerging form technology streams and use it to improve urban citizens' lives through innovation in transportation, housing, urban governance and education.[23] Through its remit of making such data more open to the public, UBDC joined the Life in Data Research Network (2017-19, funded by Royal Society of Edinburgh), led from Stirling. It mapped data literacy, openness, education policy and creative data innovation in Scotland, through a collaboration between Scottish HEIs, SCIs, public and third-sector partners, to explore the emergent field of data literacy, particularly in smaller cities and harder-to-reach regions.

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[23] https://www.ubdc.ac.uk/

Through this network emerged a fruitful partnership with Creative Stirling, a social enterprise committed to finding new ways for creative talent and energy to thrive, evolving their practice within creative industries. Their successes have come from the simple act of making space for creative approaches to learning that also explore new technologies, beginning with coding clubs for young people (Coder Dojo). This has led to funded research into meeting the needs of young people to progress their interest into more specific areas of digital and data tech for creative career trajectories. They have engaged academics and tech-sector expertise (Codebase) to broaden the programme of digital skills activity to robotics, AI and data science. Emerging social enterprises straddle the needs of the private and public sectors, and situate themselves nicely within the current STEAM movement, placing art at the centre of science, technology, engineering and mathematics – noting that digital design and creativity are essential to cities of the future. This need is reflected by Buckingham (2006), where case studies in web, gaming and digital media literacy articulate the need for critical approaches to these digital literacy domains, *before* creating them or using them as resources for learning. Therefore, the initiatives above aim to **instil a culture of in-depth digital engagement across all sectors of society, to prevent future digital literacy gaps, such as in the creative sector.**

Singapore launched the SkillsFuture movement (http://skillsfuture.sg) in 2015, as a national skills strategy to further strengthen the foundations for a highly skilled, productive and innovative economy, by supporting workforce development and enterprise transformation. Besides serving an economic objective, SkillsFuture seeks to help individuals realize their potential, regardless of their starting points. Their deputy chief executive described their multi-stakeholder approach working across government agencies, industry bodies, employers, unions, and education and training institutions, to draw up a range of skills frameworks covering various levels of job roles organized by job families across all major industry sectors. The technical, generic (transversal), and emerging skills associated within each job role were defined and articulated, with training programmes from an extensive course directory mapped to the identified skills.[24] In addition, conventional skills-forecasting approaches were augmented by technology tools and big data to increase the agility and responsiveness of the skills training system in meeting industry and economic needs specific to the region. The MySkillsFuture portal (http://myskillsfuture.sg) enables Singaporeans to create individualized learning and career profiles, access labour market information, explore training opportunities to acquire skills aligned with industry needs, and identify job opportunities aligned with their career goals. By bringing together these various sources of information, the portal is capable of making recommendations of suitable training courses and job openings, based on the educational and job history, profiles and career aspirations of individuals.

The Workers by Self-Design project (January – June, 2019) was established as a result of academic research that identified various forms of exclusion of women from job markets affected by global crises in key cities such as **Sanandaj, Iran, and Manila, the Philippines** (climate-related or human-induced, i.e. conflict, migration, effects of economic sanctions). Through emergent partnerships, representatives from three countries (UK, Iran and the Philippines) have benefited from face-to-face and online networking with the goal of strengthening and establishing new collaborations in order to tackle the issue of women's engagement with digital literacies and their changing roles. In the case of Sanandaj, the Technology Incubation Center encourages women to build their craft and business skills into viable, long-term projects. In Manila, an emergent network within the Department of Science and Technology brings female inventors together to share experiences, gain new expertise on how to secure patents and commercialise their ideas, and promote their growing business. In

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[24] Case study contributed by Dr Michael Fung, Deputy Chief Executive (Industry), Chief Human Resource Officer, and Chief Data Officer at SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG).

both cities, women are making extraordinary efforts to find employment, cut intermediaries and secure more stable revenues in contexts where opportunities seem to be unequally available to men and women. Digital literacies can make a significant impact on their journeys by supporting their aspirations and products (ranging from eco-tourism, traditional crafts and homemade products to technology-embedded clothing and other inventions).

8.2. Key challenges for the inclusion of digitally excluded populations in cities

Digital access remains a critical issue in many rural and poverty-afflicted urban areas. Underdeveloped infrastructures tend to divide communities and add a new layer of exclusion from full access to city resources, services and learning opportunities. Unbalanced distribution of networks and technologies excludes significant groups of people and affect all aspects of life, from health-related information and well-being to resources such as employment and citizenship participation.

When the issue of access becomes the limiting condition only for certain groups of individuals, solutions towards digital inclusion can be activated through increased awareness and openness of digital access. In these contexts, **infrastructures, old or new, are already in place and could be extended, implemented and made available to all** (especially in the case of older adult learners, or women in patriarchal or financially insecure contexts). Vulnerabilities of digitally marginalized groups may be determined by demographic and socioeconomic marginalization along with gender, age, ability, ethnic and racial lines, or along multiple marginalized identities and levels of inequality through an intersectional lens.

An emergent set of vulnerabilities which can be harder to identify arise not from the traditionally identified digital divide (digital access vs. non-access). More subtle forms of exclusion are currently related to the ability to critically and reflectively deal with issues such as privacy, data misuse (by private and political entities), data ownership/ authorship, social media (mis)use. Even in contexts where access to new technologies and infrastructures exists, disparities from within the digital platforms may create further disparities and marginalization, limiting empowered usage. Citizens engage with these platforms according to different literacy competencies that they are able to draw upon. Not being able to deploy these critically, effectively and reflectively may prevent communities from fully benefiting from the city-level digital 'upgrades'.

Digital policy is of increasing concern to cities, regions and counties, as data and digital technologies are used to direct and inform city-level action plans, using up-to-date (and sometimes) real-time data (Williamson, 2014), and likewise form the directions of educational and occupational trends alike (ibid). Such influence can be seen in the UNESCO (2019) brief on digital policy for moving national and regional cultural agendas forward. One logical vehicle through which national and local government can strenghten digital literacy inclusion are public libraries (please see Kim et al., 2014, for global case studies of libraries implementing such policy).

With the increasing pace of transformation of all industry sectors and enterprises brought about by globalization and digitalization, the **competencies and literacies needed by employers are evolving rapidly**. For instance, there is an acute shortage of skills in emerging areas such as AI, data analytics, robotics, cybersecurity and the 'industrial internet of things' (IIoT). To keep up with such change, capacity-building can be accessed through public institutes of higher learning, private-

training providers, community groups and employers with progressive human capital practices; however, political will and strategic regional approaches, such as that seen in Singapore, is needed for accelerating the acquisition of region-specific emerging competencies, and digital knowledge across its diverse population segments.

9. Persons with disabilities

In many countries, inclusive education is still thought of as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings. However, it must be seen more broadly as a principle that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners. This means that the aim is to eliminate social exclusion that is a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and ability. As such, it starts from the belief that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society.[25] Cities are at the core of contemporary civilization and should, therefore, be understood as the right place for social inclusion and lifelong learning for every citizen, including people with disabilities, from childhood to adulthood. A place where everyone and all encounter chances and meet opportunities for personal, educational and professional growth, for a fulfilling and an enjoyable life, both the very ground of mental, physical and spiritual health.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (ONU, 2006) aims 'to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity' (Art. 1). In order to fully accomplish this right, sustainable cities must be **both inclusive and accessible**, insofar as they are **interdependent concepts that cannot be separated**. While inclusion is a wide-ranging principle, accessibility is also a right specifically for persons with disabilities (Art. 9); that is, it should be understood as the means to implement inclusion, to make it happen in real life for real people who require any change in communication, environment, pedagogy, technology, etc., to ensure his/her right.

Accessibility is an unconditional criterion for anyone to enjoy a full life and to become a citizen. For persons with disabilities this means, first and foremost, being able to make independent decisions about matters related to their private lives, such as eating and drinking wherever they wish, using washroom facilities with convenience, and socializing in different contexts (a party, in the classroom, in a theatre). Accessibility is also a sine qua non condition for ensuring the basic rights of this social group; for instance, enrolment and participation in lessons or any other activity organized by the school, accessing quality health and rehabilitation services whenever it is necessary, being appropriately treated with due respect. In terms of employment, it means being able to apply for a job, assessed for the post in terms of competences without discrimination based on labelling or prejudice, and accessing the necessary training for a full professional contribution.

Accessibility, then, goes further, much beyond physical changes and specialized provision only. It has to do with **social participation and cultural values** that underlie actions towards building safer, more inclusive, equitable and accessible environments for all, in particular for the vulnerable. Hence, it has to be considered in any project for developing sustainable cities that are committed to lifelong learning because, without accessibility, there are no opportunities to participate and benefit from human development.

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[25] The UNESCO Salamanca Statement 25 years on: Developing inclusive and equitable education systems. *Discussion paper prepared for the International Forum on inclusion and equity in education – Every learner matters, Cali, Colombia, 11–13 September 2019.*

It is important here to emphasize that these three interdependent concepts – **accessibility, inclusion, and lifelong learning** – are neither static nor complete, because 'real life' implies changes and new demands that will transform them over time, according to emerging social or individual needs (Lippo, 2012; Silva, 2018). Consequently, it is important to develop a common framework (understanding) among those who are working collaboratively towards developing sustainable cities – principles of cross-sectoral governance, innovative financing measures, and multi-stakeholder involvement are vital here. The universe of distinct demands and needs of persons with disabilities is so vast that procedures and processes ought to undergo periodic revisions.

9.1. Policies and practices for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in cities

In the case of cities with the UNESCO Learning City Award, the city of **Larrissa in Greece** reports that, in 2015, it ran summer camps accessible to children with disabilities and, in 2016, 'a disability awareness week highlighting related learning activities was held in collaboration with the Greek National Confederation of Disabled People (ESAEA), local disability associations, parent associations and schools' (UNESCO-UIL, 2017c, pp. 80-81). The city of **Contagem in Brazil** offers its citizens courses related to disability as part of promoting social inclusion (ibid., p. 25). The city of **Swansea in Wales**, UK, cites a report of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2013 concerning the relationship between inactivity, disability and in-work poverty, and the low demand for labour in the country. While these and many other cities do much to include disabled people, it is evident that much of this work tends not to be highlighted.

However, one clear illustration of the issue of disability and actions that are taken by cities can be found in **Duhok, Iraq**, one the partner cities in the SUEUAA (Strengthening Urban Engagement of Universities in Africa and Asia) project. Disability and armed conflict are closely connected. People are disabled physically and mentally by war, and the already disabled are more severely affected than others in terms not only of the conflict itself, but also by their access to humanitarian relief (Portero and Enríquez, 2018). In Duhok, with some 800,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) mainly from Mosul as well as Syrian refugees, a range of training programmes have been put into place directed towards the psychological rehabilitation of adults. This reminds us once more of the connectedness of different forms of disadvantage.

Another example is found in **Bangladesh** through the non-formal programme 'A second chance for education', which has been implemented in the cities of **Dhaka, Chittagong and Rajshahi**. It focuses on children (with disabilities or not) working in the informal sector looking for a second chance to complete their primary education; here, a condensed and flexible primary education programme is offered. After completion of the programme, participants 'can choose either to learn vocational skills at the programme's para-trade centres, on courses that take around six months of part-time training, or to apply for a technical training that takes one-to-two years. The non-formal education programme also has job placement officers who help students – with and without disabilities – to find employment after graduating from the programme' (Khasnabis et al., 2010, p. 60).

The city of **Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates** has been recognized as an 'Accessible City for the Physically Disabled' by the World Federation of Disabled (Gulf News, 2018). For the past 38 years, Sharjah has been offering various services for persons with disabilities, especially in the transport sector. Over the years, it has worked to achieve the highest international standards on this count and, since the opening of the regional office of the World Federation of the Disabled in

Sharjah in 2013, the city has consciously pursued the goal of declaring itself friendly to 'people of determination' (ibid.). The regional office has conducted field visits to all government entities and private institutions to inform them of engineering standards designed for the physically challenged and have them adopt these standards in future projects or incorporate them into existing ones.

9.2. Key challenges for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in cities

Typically, persons with disabilities have been regarded as 'others' and viewed as having deficiencies and deficits, and there is a history in urban research of how cities are 'disabling' and how urban policies limit the possibilities of disabled people to engage fully, including in learning (Prince, 2008). **Cities remain to this day for the most part not designed with thought given to a range of physical disabilities or to those experiencing a variety of cognitive impairments. Much of the debate as to whether a city is disability-friendly tends to focus on mobility and physically infrastructure.** These are of course important as mediators of access to services, including education.

Where there are interventions, as in with much in education, these concern children rather than youths and adults, and countries around the world broadly focus on one of two strategies: the first is mainstreaming where children are taught alongside their peers with additional support, and the second is the provision of 'special schools' catering for particular needs. Most countries adopt the first of these approaches in order to provide an inclusive offer as promoted by the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2007, though there are challenges in doing so in systems that are highly segregated (Powell, 2011).

There is plenty of evidence of the content of 'official' texts being repeated in documents produced by diverse groups of stakeholders. Twenty-five years after Salamanca Conference (UNESCO, 1994) launched the concept of inclusive education, international organizations, national governments, educational bodies, academics, NGOs and companies have **incorporated 'inclusive discourse' into their documents, but there is still much to be done about how to make inclusion happen in real life.** Furthermore, despite its importance in the process of ensuring inclusion and lifelong learning, **the concept of accessibility has not yet been fully understood,** explored and incorporated in international official documents as a core principle and a tool for implementing it in public policies. The consequence of this neglect is that international guidelines on accessibility are still superficially presented in the form of basic norms to ensure mostly physical accessibility. Nonetheless, this is a mistake that reduces its importance and it overlooks the multiple areas of its application in real life of people with disabilities. **Ultimately, city-level policies and practices need to actively involve persons with disabilities, who are in many contexts left without a voice or a presence.**

10. Inclusion in cities: Key findings and gaps

This background document, developed as basis for discussion at the fourth International Conference on Learning Cities, has introduced inclusion as a principle for lifelong learning and sustainable cities. The global trend of **urbanization** is already bringing a profound impact to bear upon people's lives and the planet itself; for it to proceed sustainably, all city dwellers need to become lifelong learners – without exception. This is why the principle of inclusion is paramount. Efforts at the local level to include and involve all individuals, regardless of contextual factors, in lifelong learning opportunities transforms not only cities, but also fuels national development and aids the achievement of global goals in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Discussions around inclusion for lifelong learning and sustainable cities refer broadly to **social inclusion** and, as a major contributory factor to social inclusion, **inclusive education**. Both principles are founded on access and involvement. On the one hand, social inclusion denotes the accessibility of public services and activities to all and the involvement of all in decision-making processes. Inclusive education, meanwhile, refers to the accessibility of learning opportunities to all and the involvement of individual learners, families and communities in decision-making processes. **Access** is the foundation of inclusion as it ensures the presence of learners. **Participation** requires that learners are not only present but actively contribute or respond to learning opportunities. **Involvement** goes further and demands that learners are not merely subjects who 'receive' learning, but are co-constructors of the learning opportunities from which they benefit.

Core dimensions of **lifelong learning** and **learning cities** harmonize conceptually with inclusion through the access, participation and involvement of all learners. By its very nature, lifelong learning is all-encompassing and holistic. Learning cities are action-orientated intermediaries of lifelong learning: they translate the vision of lifelong learning for all into practical, people-centred measures to sustainably develop urban environments. Through participatory cross-sectoral governance structures and multi-stakeholder involvement – both of which must extend to the level of the local citizen – learning cities support social inclusion and inclusive education.

Moving from concepts to concrete policies and practices for inclusive lifelong learning in cities, the issue of **data sources** comes to the fore. International learning surveys, coupled with national-level comparisons, provide data on enrolment and participation rates, governance structures, skills levels and learning outcomes in learning across different modalities and diverse national contexts. Some of this data pertains to inclusion, yet more detailed analyses and evaluations of city-level initiatives are difficult to conduct using only international and national data. Unfortunately, there is a relative lack of research at the local level, which would contextualise and enrich data produced by comparative studies with a wider scope.

Vulnerable groups – in this context, those at risk of exclusion from learning opportunities – are diverse, and many individuals are excluded in multiple ways. It is too easy, for example, to consider all ethnic minorities as one group, and similarly this applies to migrants, persons with disabilities as well as others that are labelled as belonging to a particular group. Furthermore, many individuals experience more than one form of individual and situational disadvantage. As some of the examples featured in this document show, a lifelong learning policy or practice may simultaneously support the inclusion of different vulnerable groups. Additionally, lifelong

learning initiatives can ameliorate vulnerabilities caused by locational factors if they also aim for community development. This is where models such as the learning neighbourhoods of Cork, Ireland, demonstrate their value.

While acknowledging that a **broad spectrum of vulnerabilities** exists across populations, it can be useful to identify specific vulnerable groups, defined according to issues, in order to highlight policies and practices across world regions that share similar objectives. In this document, a number of groups are presented in turn: youth at risk (NEETs), migrants, digitally excluded populations, and persons with disabilities. This list of groups is not exhaustive, each group is in itself diverse, and one individual may be regarded as belonging to several groups at the same time; nevertheless, a methodical look at the contexts, policies, practices and challenges for these groups reveals some manifestations of exclusion and inclusion in cities.

For **youth at risk (NEETs)**, a holistic, cross-sectoral approach for this group's inclusion in cities can be facilitated by a comprehensive NEETs plan, as in the case of York, UK. Individual policies and practices then tend to aim either at preventing young people from becoming 'NEETs' – by, for example, supporting school-to-work transitions – or re-engaging young people who have already fallen out of education, employment and training. For this, community outreach initiatives raise awareness and facilitate pathways back into structured learning or work. Echoing a challenge common to vulnerable groups, insufficient disaggregated data on sub-groups impedes informed planning for youth at risk, while problems with responsibility, co-ordination and accountability hamper implementation.

Migrants are also vulnerable to exclusion. Again, this group of people is diverse and encompasses those who migrate within the same country or across national borders for a variety of reasons, including people who are forcibly displaced as a result of conflict or another form of instability. Policies and practices for the inclusion of migrants generally reflect the concepts of social inclusion and inclusive education, by for example supporting migrants who have recently arrived to become familiar with their new environment and gain access to basic services, or arranging targeted language classes for migrants of different ages, or developing mechanisms to admit undocumented children into local schools. Co-ordination is a challenge, as is the mobilization of financial investment and resources. Another important consideration for the inclusion of migrants is quality education: learning institutions, curricula and educators need to be sensitive to cultural differences and able to adapt to the learning needs of people whose national, social, cultural and educational backgrounds are likely to differ significantly.

In most cities, there are people who are excluded from learning by either an absence of digital infrastructure or a deficit in digital skills – and often both. In this paper, they are collectively termed **'digitally excluded populations'**. Exclusion is exacerbated by digital divides that have emerged between social groups and generations, leading in some contexts to clear correlations between demography and digital competence. Measures to promote digital inclusion in cities are often centred on infrastructure by identifying where digital access is absent and where current infrastructure needs upgrading, or they address skills development in the areas of digital literacy and data literacy. Policies and practices may reach out to specific sub-groups of digitally excluded populations by, for example, targeting elderly learners or those with low levels of literacy. Of course, the development of digital infrastructure requires significant financial investments in technology, and the pace of digital change presents an added challenge for digitally excluded populations: competencies are quickly outdated as technologies evolve, particularly in the world of work.

Persons with disabilities have for a long time faced exclusion due to insufficient levels of accessibility in cities. This concern is tied to physical infrastructure: cities have a duty to ensure that shared spaces can be reached by all. For many persons with disabilities, inclusion is thus inextricably linked to accessibility, yet cities must go further and guarantee social inclusion. This requires their full involvement in lifelong learning opportunities, whether disabilities are physical or cognitive. A crucial foundation is the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in schools, which has been the focus of international, national and local policies for many years, but there is still a great deal of work to be done. There is some evidence of similar initiatives in non-formal and informal learning modalities and other learning spaces, but there is a lack of research and targeted interventions.

Inclusion in cities remains an under-researched topic yet one of significance for lifelong learning and sustainable development. This background document provides **a starting point for exchanges between cities during the conference**, which will provide further insights to guide policy initiatives.

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