

The SDG 11 Global Council

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The establishment of Global Councils on SDGs is a testimony to the strategic role played by the United Arab Emirates as part of global efforts to achieve the SDGs. Her Excellency Reem Al Hashimy, UAE minister of state for international cooperation, and chairperson of the National Committee on Sustainable Development Goals launched the Global Councils on SDGs in 2018 during the World Government Summit in Dubai.

Global Councils on SDGs are established for two years and constitute an innovative global platform that is conducive to the exchange of views and experiences, and identifying best practices that can be translated into practical applications to accelerate the implementation of SDGs globally. In this context, Her Excellency Dr. Aisha Bint Butti Bin Bishr, director general, Smart Dubai, was appointed chairperson of the SDG 11 Global Council (SDG 11-GC). She aimed at establishing a globally representative and inclusive body by ensuring that council members represent a broad range of geographies and stakeholder types. Members were therefore selected, in 2018, from the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia-Pacific, representing multistakeholder types from worldwide experts in academia, NGOs, and the private and public sectors.

SDG 11-GC’s vision is to catalyze and accelerate the achievement of SDG 11 by 2030. The mission is to formulate a pragmatic, multistakeholder, widely-applicable SDG 11 framework for cities; and to implement selective pilot initiatives by utilizing the formulated framework.

During its course of work, SDG 11-GC capitalizes on science, technology and innovation and leverages emerging technologies such as AI, data, blockchain and Internet of Things, if and where applicable.

SDG 11-GC abides by the following principles:

- Utilizing a pragmatic approach
- Applying wide stakeholder engagement
- Leveraging existing initiatives
- Forming strong partnerships
- Recognizing differences
- Leaving no one behind.

As it commenced its work, SDG 11-GC was aware of the following challenges:

- Cities are at various levels of development with different performance characteristics with respect to SDG 11
- There are existing global initiatives at global, regional, national and local levels
- Cities might not be well informed as to how to enhance their performance with respect to SDG 11

- Public financing might be limited for cities
- The particular context with respect to institutions, administration and governance differs among cities.

SDG 11 Global Council scope of work

SDG 11-GC will conduct its work in two phases. The first entailed formulating a pragmatic, high level implementation framework for cities to utilize in implementing SDG 11, with the framework having been agreed by all Council members in February 2019. The framework assists cities to:

- Assess their current position with respect to SDG 11 targets
- Understand gaps using a data-driven evidence-based scheme such as targets and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Formulate a high-level pragmatic and actionable approach for closing identified gaps through targeted action items
- Exchange knowledge and practices among themselves.

The framework also highlights various enablers for successful implementation of SDG 11, and prescribes a high-level approach for implementing initiatives by relying strongly on robust partnerships — capitalizing on SDG 17 — from various constituents including financing organizations and public and private sector organizations, among others.

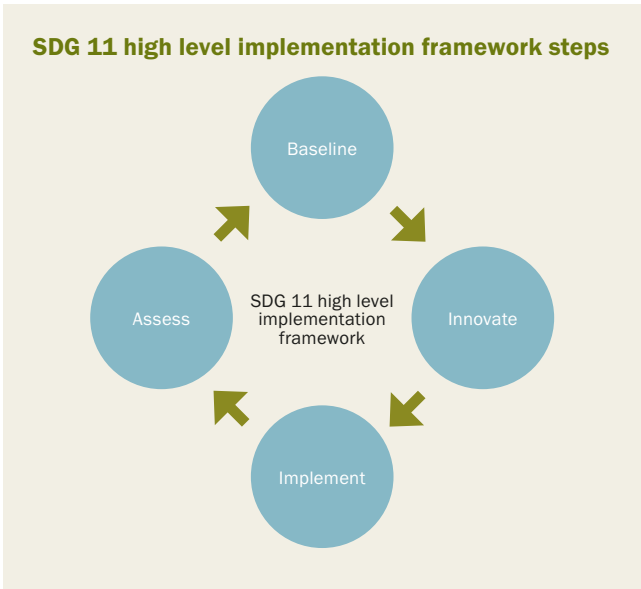
The second phase is targeted for completion by February 2020 and entails actioning the formulated framework by:

- Applying it to selected SDG 11 pilot projects globally — the actual number of implementation projects will vary based on resource availability and council consensus
- Establishing partnerships, for example between multilateral organizations, financing organizations and the private sector
- Overseeing pilot projects
- Refining and revising the formulated framework through lessons learnt.

The framework will ensure a systematic approach in the implementation of SDG 11. It will also enable transparency and impartiality for the council to select pilot projects in the second phase.

SDG 11-GC will explore and assess both horizontal and specific city / issue pilot implementation projects. Horizontal projects are applicable to more than one city addressing a general concern among cities, whereas a specific city / issue might focus on a particular issue pertinent to a single city.

Note that criteria such as well-defined scope of implementation projects, availability of financing, readiness and commitment of cities may play a key role for the selection of pilot projects.



First phase preliminary findings of SDG 11-GC — high level implementation framework

As SDG 11-GC nears the completion of its first phase of work, it has formulated its draft high level implementation framework consisting of the following steps:

Step 1 — Baseline

This entails conducting a rapid current state review and audit that determines the baseline for a city with respect to SDG 11. More specifically, it appraises a city’s current status with respect to the following three components:

- SDG 11 city targets and KPIs,
- Ongoing city-level SDG 11 initiatives and action items
- Various enablers to aid in SDG 11 implementation.

Step 1a — SDG 11 city level targets and KPIs:

SDG 11 targets are formulated at national level. The framework proposes cities to cascade down their national targets to city (local) level ones, allowing formulation of city level dashboards and comparison of performances at city level.

The framework also incorporates translating SDG 11 targets into KPIs to measure progress towards intended results as well as providing an overview of existing relevant SDG 11 KPIs formulated by credible international organizations such as UN HABITAT, ISO, U4SSC. This also gives cities the flexibility to incorporate their own specific KPIs.

Step 1b — Ongoing city-level repository of initiatives / action items

This component includes actual initiatives / action items formulated and being implemented by a city towards achieving SDG 11 targets. In some cases, they may be national level initiatives being implemented at city or local level. The role of urban observatories, if available, is briefly discussed.

A simple tool is included for a city to use to collate its list of initiatives / action items related to SDG 11 implementation.

Step 1c — Enablers

This component refers to enablers that help in implementing SDG 11. The presence of these enablers will potentially

increase the likelihood of success for a city in implementing SDG 11. The following enablers are included and briefly explained in the framework:

- Leadership and governance
- Strategy and policy
- Ecosystems and engagement
- Utilization of Science, Technology and Innovation
- Data
- Financing
- Regulations
- Skills and knowledge.

A simple checklist in the form of a table is included which can be used by a city to assess its current status, or baseline, with respect to SDG 11 enablers.

Step 2 — Innovate

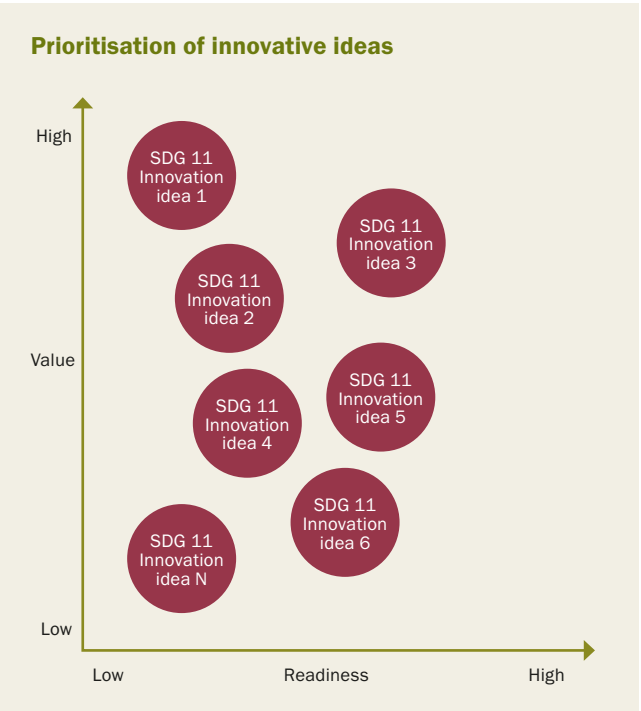
Having assessed its current status in Step 1, the city can innovate to create initiatives and action items to close its gaps with respect to SDG 11 targets. Some of the above discussed enablers can be utilized during this stage to potentially enhance the innovation effectiveness.

In this step, the city is recommended to engage stakeholders to address its urban challenges related to SDG 11. Financing alternatives can be taken into account for otherwise unfeasible innovation ideas.

Benchmarking, the inclusion of best practices, experimentation and internal innovation can all be used by cities to determine their own long list of innovation ideas.

Innovation prioritization approach

A thorough and impartial prioritization method will be useful to determine the short-listed innovation ideas for SDG 11 implementation. Hence, the framework includes a simple innovation prioritization approach with two main criteria.



The first criterion is the value that identifies the projected (ex-ante) impact of the innovation idea. The second criterion identifies the readiness of the city, or the ease of implementation of the idea by the city. Each criterion comprises several attributes that are briefly explained in the framework.

The city can then use a simple scoring system for the criteria and their attributes. The scores can be identified either qualitatively or quantitatively based on available data and conducted analyses. Having well-defined criteria and attributes also helps in more accurate relative scoring among the innovation ideas.

This prioritization approach allows cities to assess all formulated ideas with respect to well-defined criteria. Hence, at the end of Step 2, a city will have a concrete list of initiatives and action items for SDG 11 implementation. The city can then formulate an implementation plan by deciding which initiatives and action items to begin, and at what point. Certain restrictions such as human and financial resources constraints may determine actual implementation timing. The initiatives and action items can be phased out depending on restrictions and their mitigation timeframes. In some cases, cities may opt to diminish implementation risks prior to commencing the implementation of initiatives and action items.

Step 3 — Implement

This step entails the city’s actual implementation of SDG 11 initiatives and action items in line with the plan created in the previous step, with cities assembling the resources required. High calibre programme and project management skills would be of benefit during implementation.

It is important to note that enablers introduced in Step 1 can be utilized during Step 3 to catalyse implementation. Some examples are given below to illustrate the approach:

- KPIs might help in overseeing and monitoring progress
- Political leadership and appropriate governance would help in timely and robust execution
- Policies might be used as a tool to induce certain behaviour and outcomes
- Extensive stakeholder engagement would ensure early buy-in and increase the chances of success through consensus. Innovation ecosystems consisting of public and private sectors as well as civil society (NGOs) would be beneficial for successful implementation
- Skill and knowledge gaps can be identified early in the process, and targeted training and research and development programmes can be launched to mitigate them
- Financing gaps can be closed by alternative financing mechanisms through appropriate planning.

Step 4 — Assess

This step involves the post-implementation assessment of the results for SDG 11 initiatives and action items. Cities are encouraged to assess the actual outcomes with respect to those intended. This step will allow the city to evaluate whether or not it has reached its intended city (local) level SDG 11 targets. If the city had formulated KPIs with target values and timeframes for achievement, it would be important to assess whether the targets have been met and the actual role the initiatives and action items have played in achieving them.



SDG 11-GC will finalize and publish its SDG 11 high level implementation framework by the second quarter of 2019 for cities to utilize as an input to their SDG 11 implementations

Similarly, various enablers can be assessed for their effectiveness. Lessons learnt can be identified to determine favourable and adverse consequences of the initiatives and strategic action items. Positive aspects of successful initiatives may potentially be cross-utilized; for example, a successful policy in one initiative may trigger the use of a similar policy approach in another. Such examples can be extended to other enablers, while identification of ineffective enablers would result in their potential relinquishment.

It is important to note that subsequent to the assessment conducted in Step 4, cities are expected to revert to Step 1 and re-initiate the high level implementation framework cycle by defining their new baselines or current status. This is important since SDG 11 is valid until 2030, and recurring application of the SDG 11 high level implementation framework will be essential.

SDG 11 Global Council upcoming work

SDG 11-GC will finalize and publish its SDG 11 high level implementation framework by the second quarter of 2019 for cities to utilize as an input to their SDG 11 implementations. Subsequently, pilot implementation projects will be determined by council members and will be undertaken during 2019 which mostly forms the second phase of the council work.

SDG 11-GC anticipates that both the high level implementation framework and the conducted pilot projects will assist all aspiring cities to provide guidance and, to a certain extent, support in implementing their own SDG 11 initiatives to achieve the 2030 targets. SDG 11-GC aims to contribute substantially to making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.