How does SymbioCity support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognize the significance and potential of urbanization for a sustainable future by stressing the importance of a holistic, integrated and inclusive approach to urban development. SymbioCity welcomes and supports this development by facilitating guidance for local authorities on how to move into action and achieve the goals.

What are the challenges faced in today's cities?

Cities around the world each day attract more inhabitants in the pursuit of a better life. But this also put pressure on local authorities to plan and develop their cities in accordance with demographic development, needs of the inhabitants and within the ecological boundaries of our one and only planet.

Cities have by some been called "the most complex phenomena ever created by humans" through its intertwined urban systems affecting and reacting with each other, their spatial dimensions and social realities. The importance of local authorities in coordinating holistic planning and finding systemic urban solutions together with public, private and academic actors is thus crucial for the achievement of the SDGs. As the users of the urban systems are the inhabitants, they should be put in the center of the planning process through participative and inclusive decision making measures to optimize the usability and success of the urban development.

Today many local authorities face several challenges in achieving the SDGs. Amongst other, internal technical and urban expertise is often lacking, especially in smaller and mid-sized cities. This results not only in difficulties with designing and implementing specific urban functions, but the facilitation of adequate, holistic and systemic urban development plans for the cities of tomorrow. The achievement of the SDGs is strongly linked to the contextual complexities in different parts of the world, therefore it is crucial with expertise that can facilitate a prioritization process of the SDG targets to focus on those considered most important for the specific city.

What does SymbioCity provide to face the challenges?

SymbioCity promotes a holistic, visionary and inclusive approach to sustainable urban development which includes environmental, socio-cultural, economic and spatial dimensions as well as institutional, gender and pro-poor perspectives. It provides methods, processes and tools that make it possible to identify synergies and integrated solutions between different urban systems through a human centered perspective. That results in better use of local resources and assets as well as puts less stress on the local environment. SymbioCity improves working procedures, increases capacity; and identifies new solutions for how to plan, develop and

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Example of SDG targets supported by SymbioCity activities

Goal 11

- 11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums

- 11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries

- 11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities

Goal 16

- 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

Goal 17

- 17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships

In what way does SymbioCity support the achievement of the SDGs?

SymbioCity has since 2010 supported local authorities in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America in inclusive and sustainable urban planning. The core focus of the approach is thus to support implementation of SDG *11 Sustainable cities and communities: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient & sustainable.* But due to the complexity of cities, Goal 11 cannot be looked at independently, since many of the goals rely on each other in order to achieve a truly sustainable and inclusive city. A pre-requisite in any urban planning process is to ensure establishment of strong local institutions that enables accountable, responsive and inclusive decision making processes through participation of stakeholders and partnerships with public, private and academic actors. SDG *16 Peace, justice and strong institutions* and *17 Partnerships for the goals* are therefore integral as institutional components in all SymbioCity projects.

SymbioCity provides a generic and cyclical working procedure that can be used in a wide range of urban planning processes. To acknowledge urban complexity, the procedure includes local assessments of urban thematic and perspectives including poverty reduction (**SDG 1**), gender equality (**SDG 5**), clean water and sanitation (**SDG 6**), affordable and clean energy (**SDG 7**), industry, innovation and infrastructure (**SDG 9**), reduced inequalities (**SDG 10**), responsible consumption and productions (**SDG 12**), climate action (**SDG 13**), life below water (**SDG 14**) and life on land (**SDG 15**). The assessments are based on local realities resulting in place specific focus areas in each project.

As we live in a predominantly urban world cities are crucial for the overall achievement of the SDGs. SymbioCity aims to support this development by providing tools that move from displaying **what** needs to be done to show **how** to move into action and achieve the goals, without compromising a strong foundation on local realities and pre-requisites.