

PRESS RELEASE:

Access to healthy food: lessons from a pandemic

#BeyondTheOutbreak

The pandemic has shown, at a time when people have stopped working, stopped moving, and when borders have been closed by necessity, the weaknesses of our production and food systems. Large parts of the population have seen their access to quality food worsened. The transformation of the food system, and the role of territories in it, is taking hold in the urban era and even more so in the pandemic.

The pandemic has increased the food crisis we were seeing before, with poorer and more isolated communities having access only to poorer quality food. The Live Learning Experience on our Food Systems, organized by **UCLG**, **Metropolis**, and **UN-Habitat** together with the **City of Valencia and the Valencia World Centre for Sustainable Urban Food**, explored the initiatives of cities to carry out a food-based response to the pandemic, and to assess what the food systems of the future should look like to help rebuild and mitigate the impact of future crises.

Joan Ribó, Mayor of Valencia, addressed the importance of local and regional governments being involved in food governance, being key actors in the food supply of many vulnerable people. Along with examples of policies carried out by the city council, such as the extension of canteen grants during confinement, and food education initiatives, the mayor stressed the importance of feeding oneself beyond the act of "eating".

"Food should no longer be exclusively an issue of supermarkets, but rather an issue that is addressed with people at the centre. Eating is a cultural process, which we must develop by being aware of and strengthening the bond with our producers".

Throughout the session, participants such as the Mayor of Pariaman **Genius Umar**, the Director General of the Department of Social Nutrition of Kazan, **Rima Mukhamedshina**, or **Patricio Abad**, Director of Economic Development of Azuay, emphasized the immediate response, ensuring the supply of food to citizens, and in particular to vulnerable populations such as students, health workers, and people working in the informal sector. **Farissa Bensalem**, Chief of Staff of the Mayor's Office of Gennevilliers, addressed the issue of "food justice"

in her city by implementing measures such as a food ticket for modest families, and trying to ensure access to quality food for families without resources.

Andrea Magarini, coordinator of food policy in Milan, pointed out the importance of having data on what and how our citizens eat in order to be able to transform the political responses to their needs, giving the example of his city, in which during the pandemic citizens consumed more fresh produce.

Maite Rodríguez, Coordinator of the Latin American and Caribbean Women and Habitat Network, pointed out the importance of building the rights of women, the large micro-producers, in order to build resilience to the bloc. The recognition of women's work, and the allocation of resources, are key to ensuring women's rights in the city. **Kobie Brand**, Director of ICLEI Africa, presented the "AfricanCITYFOODmonth" an initiative in conjunction with **FAO** and the **RUAF** (Global Partnership on Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Food Systems) and advocated for improving food systems as a necessary step to regenerate nature, mitigate the climate crisis, and end injustices. **Remy Sietchiping**, Head of Policy, Law and Urban Governance, UN-Habitat, advocated incorporating the element of solidarity into the way we look at food systems so that no one and no territory is left behind.

Marcela Villarreal, Director of Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Building, FAO, closed the debate by noting that a holistic approach to food and nutrition is essential to build a new relationship with our environment. She praised the UCLG's **Decalogue for the Post-COVID-19 Era**, noting that the areas on proximity models, green partnership, an interurban system, and the next generation of multilateralism can be key to generating synergies between UCLG and FAO.

Vicente Domingo, Director, Valencia World Centre for Sustainable Urban Food, said that food is a political option, and that local and regional governments have an important role to play in educating people about food. In the most important crisis of the 21st century, he reminded, it is important to maintain that good nutrition is an act of responsibility not only to oneself, but to the communities around us.

Emilia Saiz, Secretary General of UCLG, highlighted the importance of changing the relationship between cities and food. According to her, we must move from seeing cities as consumers of food and turn them into real actors in the production system, seen from a territorial and polycentric solidarity. The way in which COVID-19 has tested our systems, she said, will have to be a lesson that transforms priorities and goes hand in hand with an ecological transition that allows us to rethink our relationship with nature.

About Live Learning Experience Series:

The [Live Learning Series](#) hosted by UCLG, Metropolis, and UN-Habitat, has brought together more than 2,000 participants over the course of ten sessions in which participants from local and regional governments, the UN system, and partners from civil society shared their experiences, initiatives, and actions to support their communities facing the pandemic through the provision of key basic services. The series started late March and cities across the globe have shared their experiences, initiatives and actions in response to the pandemic. They also shared their frontline views on how cities may transform beyond the outbreak.

About United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

UCLG is the global organization of local and regional governments and their associations that represents and defends their interests on the world stage. Representing 70 per cent of the world's population, UCLG members are present in all world regions: Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Eurasia, Middle East-West Asia, Latin America and North America - organised in seven continental sections, a metropolitan section and a regional forum. This network covers more than 240,000 cities, regions and metropolises and more than 175 local and regional government associations present in 140 countries. UCLG includes among its main areas of political interest local democracy, climate change and environmental protection, the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, the role of culture in sustainability, local finance, urban development and city diplomacy for peacebuilding. Visit www.uclg.org and follow [@uclg_org](https://twitter.com/uclg_org) for more.

About UN-Habitat

UN-Habitat is the UN agency focused on our cities, towns and communities. UN-Habitat works in over 90 countries supporting people in cities and human settlements for a better urban future. Working with governments and local partners, its high impact projects combine world-class expertise and local knowledge to deliver timely and targeted solutions. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a dedicated Goal on cities, SDG 11 – to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Visit www.unhabitat.org and follow [@unhabitat](https://twitter.com/unhabitat) for further information.

About Metropolis:

Metropolis brings together the governments of 138 urban agglomerations worldwide. Founded in 1985, today the association is the focal point of expertise on metropolitan governance. Raising the voices of metropolises to the global agenda and building capacity to deliver public policies and services, Metropolis contributes to finding common answers to the challenges of metropolisation. Metropolis operates, as well, as the metropolitan section of the World Organisation of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) since its constitution in 2004.

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