

PRESS RELEASE

Social dialogue remains key to keep workers safe during and beyond the COVID-19 outbreak.

#BeyondTheOutbreak

Local public delivery is often overlooked in the public debate, but it is a critical aspect of how we live especially during the pandemic. Public workers on the frontline have carried out their essential tasks, which have been critical to support the implementation of sanitary measures. The thirteenth thematic live learning experience paid attention to the important role of public workers and to hear the perspective of local governments and workers experience as the first line of public provision.

Participants highlighted the importance of **social dialogue and solidarity as critical aspects for the recovery** and underscored the importance of building and maintaining alliances between local governments and workers in order to come out of the crisis with a renewed outlook on the importance of taking care of workers.

The session was introduced by **Rosa Pavanelli**, Secretary General of **Public Service International (PSI)**, who argued that the work of PSI, as a union, had been focused on recognising the fundamental rights of workers. She expressed the need to *"build an alliance between workers and local governments to carry out preparedness approach for our communities. We need to be bolder, and dare more in asking for the role that local governments can fulfil"*.

André Dizkus, Chief, Urban Basic Services Section, Global Solutions Division of UN-Habitat explained the challenges that many public workers have in working from home and called for them to be valued and recognised. He relayed a message from the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, **Maimunah Mohd Sharif**, who stated that *"compassion and solidarity are necessary to tackle this crisis, as are local and regional governments and their work in caring for public workers."*

Emilia Saiz, Secretary General of UCLG, argued that, in order to defend public services, a partnership between worker organizations and local and regional governments is needed, to publicise the threat to the sustainability of public services. She commended the partnership with Public Service International as the way forward. *"It will be critical to guarantee the sustainability of public service delivery, and this includes improving the precarious jobs and the under resourced services. The recognition of some jobs as essential, including those that have been*

outsourced, will need to be part of the equation if we want to create resilient systems," she said.

Edgardo Bilsky, Director of Research of UCLG facilitated the first roundtable, centring on the need for **social dialogue for strong, resilient local public services**, in which participants highlighted social dialogue undertaken during the crisis. **Armand Béouindé, Mayor of Ouagadougou**, highlighted measures taken by the city to protect public workers, such as allowing more public employees to work-from-home and increasing turnover between staff in the town hall, as well as reducing working hours.

Pilar Díaz, Mayor of Esplugues de Llobregat, and Deputy Councillor for International Relations of the Barcelona Provincial Council, called for local authorities and workers to work together to find the formula to address the current situation, and highlighted the social dialogue endeavours in Esplugues as a way forward. **Malika Yerlanova, Deputy Mayor of Nursultan**, laid out the measures in her city to deal with the social crisis, in particular by providing groceries to people who needed them, and providing grants to create new jobs and maintain old ones.

Juneia Batista, Head of the National Women Secretariat, Central Única dos Trabalhadores and Union of Municipal Servants of Sao Paulo (SINDSEP-SP) Executive, Brazil described the difficult situation for public workers in Brazil, in particular those at the frontline. She outlined action taken by public work organizations to guarantee that more people could work in public services and reduce the toll on services that were under stress. **Mads Samsing**, Chair of the Standing Committee of the European Public Service Union for Local and Regional Governments Standing Committee Chair and HK Kommunal Vice Chairman, argued that the measures to contain the virus, however necessary, have left an economic crisis and that public services, collective bargaining and social protection have been and will continue to be critical to **contain and recover from the health crisis**.

Nicoletta Grieco, Head of the International Office of Italian General Confederation of Labor CGIL Funzione Pubblica, highlighted the experience of social dialogue in Italy during the pandemic to secure the safety and security of all workers, in particular those of the waste sector and others on the frontline.

The second roundtable, on **Local public service continuation and workers' safety in times of COVID-19** was introduced by **Daria Cibrario**, Policy Officer for Local and Regional Governments, PSI. It opened with **Jon Richards**, Head of Local Government, UNISON the UK's Public Service Union, who argued that the **flexibility of local governments** had allowed for fluid communication among workers and institutions, and called for securing funding for local governments to build back better after the crisis.

Mi-Jeong Park, Senior Specialist of **Goyang City**, in the Republic of Korea, highlighted how the local government had worked to reduce the spread of the

virus, and carried out emergency dialogues with hospitals and collected opinions from workers to ensure their safety despite all the challenges.

Bernard Dreno, Occupational Health and Safety Specialist, French Democratic Confederation of Labour, argued that the crisis has made it possible to learn by setting up organisations that could become sustainable and to enrich the role of institutional and administrative players. **Mauricio Zanin**, Advisor of the Confederation of Municipalities of Brazil, highlighted the response from mayors in a country in which the pandemic was not widely recognized, by ensuring funds for health, social assistance, and even funeral care.

Makrem Amaria, General Secretary of the Tunisian General Labour Union for Municipalities, argued that securing financial resources for local governments, and strengthening the capacities of municipal actors and local elected officials and guaranteeing public services would be critical for the recovery phase. This was echoed by **Carlos Carrión Crespo**, Public Service and Utilities Specialist of the ILO, who also argued that local and regional governments need to take measures to protect those that are most vulnerable.

The wrap-up was conducted by **Octavi De la Varga**, Secretary General of Metropolis, who pinpointed how the recovery in the post-COVID era needed to differ from that of the financial crisis of 2008, which dismantled many public services. He further argued that it is essential to shift how local governments, and societies handle human resources, and called on local governments and all stakeholders to be creative, and for the establishment of a mix of local, regional, and national public workers to deliver these essential services for the populations.

Cities were called to upload their experiences in the platform www.citiesforglobalhealth.org where over 400 cases can be found.

The live learning exercises will continue next week, with a session on **accessibility**.

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 Public Services International (PSI)

Public Services International (PSI) is the Global Union Federation of more than 700 trade unions representing 30 million workers in 154 countries, including local and regional government workers. PSI stands up for quality public services for all, trade union rights and a fairer share for working people the world over. We bring the voice of public service workers to the global level, through work within the UN, ILO and other International Organisations. Visit <https://publicservices.international/> and follow [@PSIglobalunion](https://twitter.com/PSIglobalunion)

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