

## **SDG 11 Side Event at ECOSOC Partnerships Forum:**

*Accelerating evidence-based action and partnerships for SDG 11*

**27 January 2026, 13:15 – 14:30**

**Virtual**

### **Organizers / Participants**

- TBC

### **Background**

Adequate housing is a cornerstone of sustainable urban development and lies at the heart of SDG 11. Yet the world is facing a deepening global housing crisis. Nearly 2.8 billion people lack access to adequate housing, and 1.1 billion people live in informal settlements and slums, while over 300 million are experiencing homelessness. Rising costs, limited supply, insecure tenure, inadequate services, climate related risks, and demographic pressures among others are intensifying housing gaps across regions. Yet housing is a human right that must be fulfilled.

To date, progress on SDG 11 housing related targets remains uneven across countries. While some progress is observed, the magnitude of the global housing crisis, and the plight of those living in informal settlements and slums in particular is alarming. Progress on housing is also urgent as it is interconnected with several other SDGs including SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 9 and SDG 17, among others. The 2026 review of SDG 11 presents a strategic opportunity to rethink and reset pathways to 2030. The mid-term review of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) further presents a means to reshape the next decade of action. UN-Habitat's new Strategic Plan 2026-2029 also places housing, land and basic services at the core.

A critical priority for accelerating progress on the 2030 agenda is to address the persistent gaps in urban data for tracking, monitoring and reporting on SDG 11. While understanding urban dynamics across the SDG indicators remains critical to facilitating actions that respond to areas where majority of the urban population live, availability of reliable and up to date data at the city scale remains a major concern, owing to various factors such as general limitations in spatially disaggregated data, technical and resourcing capacities, and lack of local data collection mechanisms in cities and/or clear mechanisms for localization of national statistical processes. These data gaps are particularly acute for SDG 11 indicators, especially those related to housing adequacy, slums and informal settlements, access to basic services, mobility, environmental exposure, and urban risk, where many countries continue to rely on outdated, infrequent, or proxy data that mask intra-urban inequalities. The absence of routinely produced, spatially disaggregated, and locally validated data limits the ability of national and local governments to prioritize investments, target the most vulnerable populations, and track whether interventions are reaching those most in need. With fewer than five years remaining to 2030, failure to strengthen SDG 11 data systems now risks locking in blind spots that will undermine accountability, slow progress, and weaken evidence-based decision-making at precisely the moment when cities are expected to absorb continued population growth, climate shocks, and fiscal pressures.

At the same time, recent advances in geospatial data, community driven settlement mapping, climate risk analytics, digital housing registries, housing microfinance, construction technologies, and incremental upgrading models offer new opportunities to accelerate progress. When combined, these innovations make it increasingly feasible to generate more frequent, spatially disaggregated, and policy-relevant data on slums, informal settlements, and housing adequacy, while also strengthening links between data, planning, and investment decisions. However, realizing this potential will require deliberate action to move beyond fragmented pilots toward interoperable, nationally owned urban data ecosystems that align official statistics, local government systems, and community data, and that embed safeguards to ensure inclusion, data protection, and the prevention of harm. In the remaining years to 2030, scaling these approaches through coordinated partnerships such as data coalitions will be critical to translating innovation into sustained impact, accountability, and measurable improvements in the lives of people living in slums and informal settlements.

To leverage and maximise the opportunities for monitoring SDG 11, UN-Habitat launched a Global Urban Data Coalition at the 12<sup>th</sup> session of the World Urban Forum in November 2024. The Coalition aims to bring together various organizations working at the different levels to advance harmonization of concepts, to leverage their expertise to support the production and open sharing of harmonized, time-relevant, and policy relevant data from the local to the global levels, and to advance capacity development initiatives among cities, national and global organizations. The coalition's initial work areas include monitoring slums and informal settlements and monitoring urban expansion and vacant urban land; with new urban thematic work areas projected in the coming years.

Beyond coordination, the Global Urban Data Coalition provides a platform for aligning innovation with official statistical processes to ensure that emerging data sources directly strengthen SDG 11 monitoring and reporting. By fostering collaboration between national statistical offices, local governments, academia, civil society, and the private sector, the Coalition helps bridge long-standing divides between official statistics, spatial data, and community-generated information, particularly for slums and informal settlements that are often underrepresented in conventional data systems. In the remaining years to 2030, the Coalition's role in promoting interoperable standards, shared methodologies, and practical implementation guidance will be critical to enabling countries and cities to transition from episodic data collection to routine, sustainable, and decision-relevant SDG 11.1 data production, thereby strengthening accountability, targeting of investments, and evidence-based urban policy at scale.

As preparations for the 2026 High-level Political Forum and the global SDG 11 synthesis report advance, there is a pressing need to accelerate solutions and partnerships that can strengthen the evidence base for SDG 11 in the remaining years to 2030. Persistent gaps in timely, disaggregated, and city-level data particularly for indicators related to housing, slums, informal settlements, and access to urban services continue to constrain effective policy-making, investment prioritization, and accountability.

The purpose of this side event is to provide a focused and technically grounded platform for dialogue among key stakeholders, including national statistical offices, local and regional governments, international organizations, academia, civil society, and the private sector. The event will facilitate the exchange of practical experiences, data innovations, and institutional

approaches for improving the production, integration, and use of urban data for SDG 11, with particular attention to the period leading up to 2030.

Through targeted discussion and partnership building, the side event aims to identify actionable pathways for strengthening urban data systems, scaling successful practices, and fostering collaboration such as through the Global Urban Data Coalition to ensure that SDG 11 monitoring is timely, reliable, and decision-relevant, and that improved data effectively supports implementation and measurable impact on the ground.

## **Objectives**

The overall objectives of the session are to:

1. Strengthen and deepen partnerships to advance action-oriented approaches for improving the monitoring of SDG 11, drawing on practical experience and innovation from cities, practitioners, research institutions, community organizations, and private sector actors.
2. Generate concrete and policy-relevant inputs to inform the 2026 High-level Political Forum review of SDG 11 and the global SDG 11 synthesis report, including actionable recommendations, identification of critical evidence gaps, and documentation of scalable and replicable partnership models for urban data and monitoring.
3. Leverage stakeholder's and partners perspectives typically less represented in intergovernmental sessions, including civil society, informal settlement networks, technical experts, local practitioners, and private sector innovators, whose insights are essential for improving the relevance, inclusiveness, and impact of SDG 11 data systems.

The specific objectives of the event are to:

1. Identify system level barriers and enablers that affect the ability of governments, communities, and partners to strengthen the monitoring of SDG 11, including regulatory frameworks, land administration, financing systems, and data gaps.
2. Showcase proven and emerging solutions and good practices to transform SDG 11 monitoring including geospatial and digital tools and technologies that can be adapted to diverse contexts.
3. Emphasize the role of local action and the leadership of local and regional governments (LRGs) in the monitoring of SDG 11 contribution of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs) in strengthening monitoring, accountability, and policy evidence for SDG 11, demonstrating how local data and localised assessments can inform the global review and enrich the 2026 HLPF process.

## **Expected Outcomes**

1. Strengthened engagement among stakeholders including community-based organizations, research institutions, and local implementers, helping expand the ecosystem of actors contributing to global monitoring and policy processes.

2. A concise set of technical insights and recommendations relevant to SDG 11 targets, including evidence needs, data innovations, and practical approaches to for scaling urban monitoring.
3. A collection of good urban data practices and emerging innovations to inform the SDG 11 synthesis report and the review at HLPF 2026.
4. Identification of opportunities for collaboration on adequate housing data, research, and community led or public private initiatives.

## Programme

**Moderator:** Edlam Yemeru: Director Global Knowledge and Advocacy Division

Time	Item
13:15 – 13:20	<b>Welcome and framing remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UN-Habitat Executive Director</li> </ul>
13:20 – 13:35	<b>Expert ‘fire-starter’ presentations (2 minutes each)-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBC</li> </ul>
13:35 – 14:10 PM	<b>Moderated technical panel and open dialogue</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Guiding Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the most binding data constraints for countries and cities to monitor SDG 11.1, and where have these constraints been successfully overcome?</li> <li>Which partnerships for data solutions have enabled scalable and sustainable monitoring of slums and informal settlements under SDG 11.1?</li> <li>How are local and regional governments strengthening localized data systems for SDG 11, and how can national–local data integration be improved?</li> <li>Which data innovations and digital public infrastructure are most promising for accelerating SDG 11 reporting and action on slums and informal settlements?</li> <li>Looking ahead to 2030, what are the two most critical actions the Global Urban Data Coalition must take to ensure SDG 11 data is timely, trusted, and decision-relevant, at both national and city levels?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
14:10 – 14:25	<b>Audience contributions and short Q&amp;A</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on practical experiences, case studies, and solution sharing.</li> </ul>
14:25 – 14:30	<b>Closing reflections</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Edlam Yemeru:</b> Summary of key technical messages for SDG 11 synthesis report and HLPF review</li> </ul>

## **Additional Information**

For more information on the 2026 ECOSOC Partnership Forum, please visit:  
<https://sdgs.un.org/events>

For questions regarding this side event, please contact the organizers at: [yemeru@un.org](mailto:yemeru@un.org);  
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