

# SECONDARY CITIES POST COVID-19

Achieving Urban Sustainable and  
Regenerative Development in Emerging  
Economies



**Many secondary cities in emerging economies have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic fallout.**

This book comprises a collection of vignettes outlining ideas and arguments about how secondary and intermediate cities can recover from the impacts of COVID-19 and adopt a pathway towards more sustainable and regenerative development. It explores nine key sub-themes to the recovery, based on the evidence and opinions of experts in each field. It provides policy and planning recommendations, as well as practical initiatives and approaches that secondary cities can use. The publication is also a farewell tribute to the work of William (Billy) Cobbett, outgoing Director of Cities Alliance.

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# KEY ARGUMENTS AND IDEAS

- Three key principles should guide the recovery: rehabilitative development, sustainable development and regenerative development.
- A reassessment of urban strategy and the common assumptions of urban growth models is necessary to rebalance the current “big city bias”.
- Secondary cities can address their local economic recovery through a four-step framework, with an emphasis on fostering equitable economic growth (EEG).
- Diverse types of hard and soft infrastructure will require enhancement and support to boost the recovery of secondary cities.
- Financing the recovery will involve deepening the processes of decentralization and strengthening the fiscal capacities of local authorities.
- For transport and logistics networks, a new approach is needed with greater emphasis on localized supply chains and networks, circular economy principles, and more inclusive and regional trade regimes.
- Governments, local businesses, and communities will need operational resilience to be able deliver the infrastructure, services, resources and enabling environment to support post COVID-19 recovery.
- Secondary cities can enhance their resilience to future shocks, pandemics, and disasters by investing in preparedness, developing institutional capacity, and building more resilient infrastructure.
- The importance of restoring social capital in cities must be recognized in order to build smarter, more equitable, sustainable and inclusive communities.





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# EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

*There is an opportunity for secondary cities to capitalize on the wave of innovations and ideas that are emerging from the pandemic, provided they are supported with resources, skills, and know-how.*

Solutions to recovery and creating a better future are more likely to come from the decisions of local governments, communities and small-scale enterprises than central governments. The change brought about by COVID-19 can be leveraged to:

- Build a more balanced model of less export-oriented development and endogenous growth, with a strong focus on boosting levels of domestic trade, innovation, skills development, savings, investment, and responsible consumption
- Correct the neglect of the role of secondary cities in national development, which has occurred in policy areas for decades.
- Better recognize the informal economy and other marginalized groups for the legitimate value they bring to urban economies.
- Where countries do not have viable social protection systems or sufficient public services, this is a chance to identify the shortcomings and develop them.





The challenges and impacts of COVID-19 will be significant; however, the crisis is a chance to recalibrate and address other ongoing problems associated with the management of population growth, urban development, poverty and climate change. It is essential that the approach to post-COVID-19 recovery, in secondary cities, not only wins community support for change but builds the platforms and support mechanisms to realise opportunities that result from change.

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*The world is at a tipping point in history where there is a vital opportunity to bring about responsible and collective change and to rethink the future model of economic and social development.*

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