



# FRAMEWORK FOR DIGNITY IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

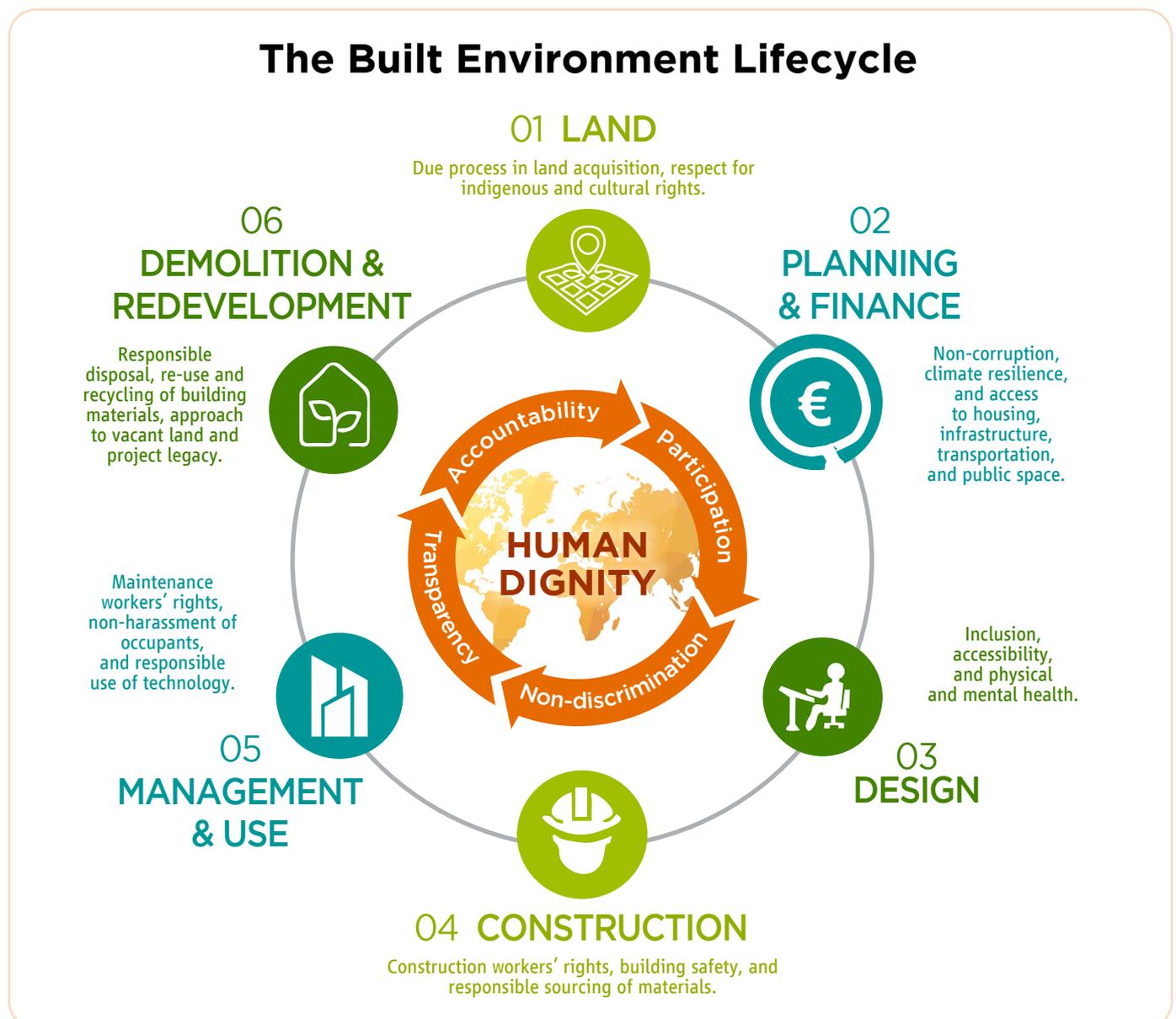
A roadmap for human rights

## The “Dignity by Design Framework”

This Framework provides a vision for dignity and respect for human rights throughout the built environment lifecycle. It provides recommendations for action at each stage of the process: from land acquisition, planning and financing, through design, construction, management and use, to demolition and re-development. The Framework is not a new set of standards. Instead, it is based on international human rights standards and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Framework is applicable at the level of individual projects and in wider urban development policies. Siloed, disconnected approaches will fail to address root problems or lead to long-term solutions: The Framework seeks to advance greater, effective interaction between stakeholders.

### It can be put into action by:

- Communities and workers impacted by a built environment project, to advocate for change and strengthen accountability.
- Local and national governments: to inform policy, planning, public procurement and projects.
- Investors and owners, to manage risks and maximise social outcomes at portfolio and project level.
- Industry (architecture, engineering and construction) to guide respect for human rights throughout operations and supply chains.
- Academia, as rights-based analytical framework for research projects.



# Overarching Framework

Throughout all stages of the built environment lifecycle:

- All human rights standards are upheld, including the cross-cutting principles of transparency, accountability, participation and non-discrimination.
- Everyone has the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the decisions that affect their neighbourhoods and lives. This includes women, children, minorities, migrants, refugees, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, older persons and others whose perspectives are often excluded.
- Trade unions and civil society can operate freely.
- All decisions are free from corruption.
- Action is taken on climate change, the environment and biodiversity, recognising the inextricable links between this action and human rights



## 01 LAND

- No-one is forcibly evicted from their home, in accordance with international standards.
- Land acquisition is carried out with meaningful consultation and following due process.
- Indigenous and cultural rights are protected.



## 02 PLANNING & FINANCE

- The right to adequate housing is respected – including security of tenure, affordability and habitability.
- All neighbourhoods have access to adequate infrastructure, public space, transportation, and employment opportunities.
- Systemic and past injustices are taken into account.
- Resilience to climate-related and other disasters is strengthened, with an emphasis on participation and social cohesion.



## 03 DESIGN

- The built environment expands inclusion and accessibility, regardless of age, ability, race, gender and other factors.
- The built environment has a positive impact on physical and mental health.
- Design seeks to open rather than close space for the realisation of all human rights and the protection of human dignity.



## 04 CONSTRUCTION

- Construction workers' rights are respected in accordance with ILO standards, at all tiers of the construction process - by lead companies and sub-contractors.
- Materials are selected and sourced responsibly, with regard to their social and environmental impacts.
- Buildings are structurally safe, putting an end to the preventable loss of life in building collapses and fires.



## 05 OPERATION & USE

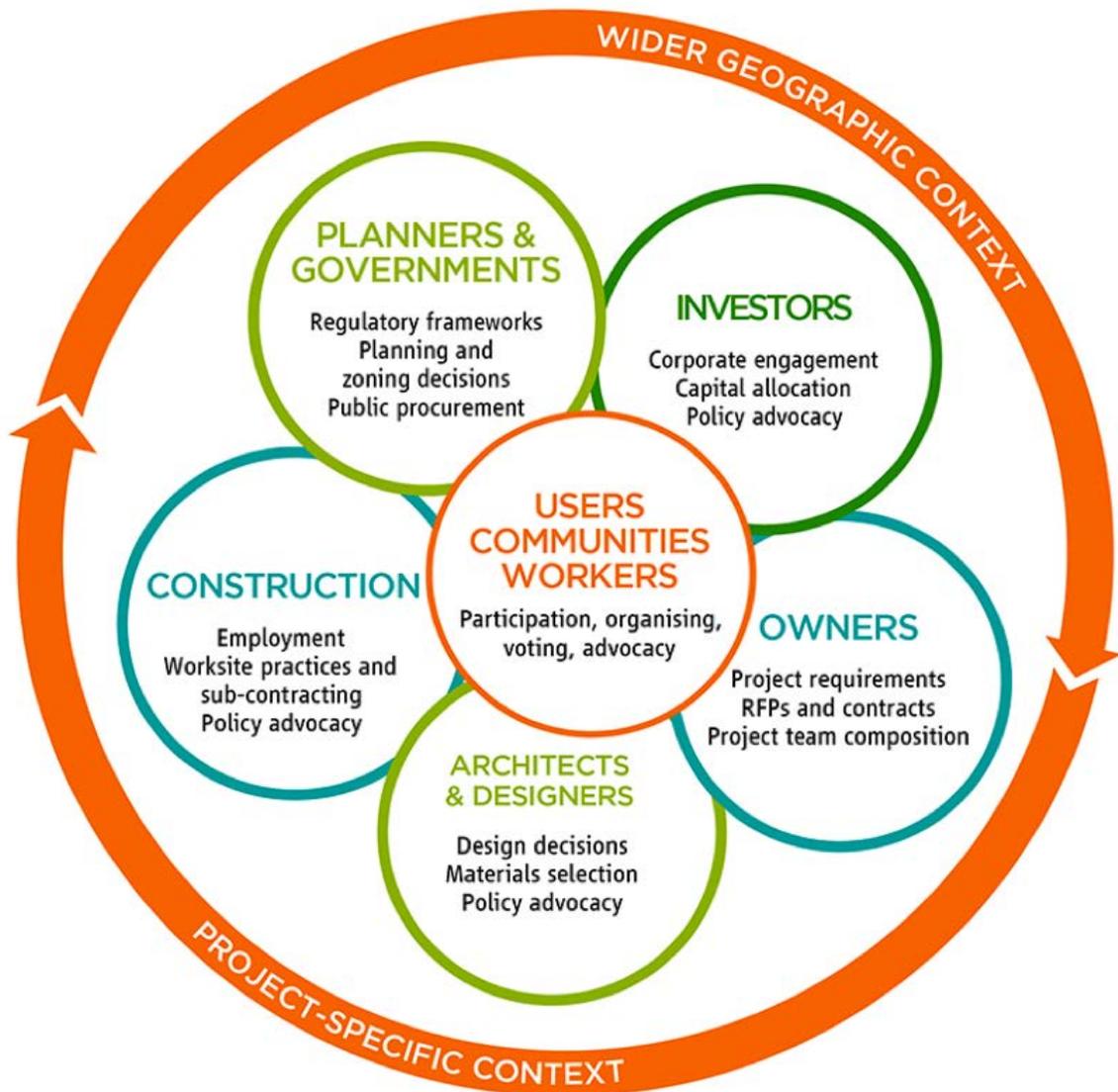
- Everyone, including marginalised communities, has healthy, accessible, and safe, spaces to live, work, and be at leisure.
- Tenants are free from harassment.
- Technology is harnessed in a way that safeguards digital rights including privacy and freedom of expression.



## 06 DEMOLITION & REDEVELOPMENT

- Vacant land is seen as an opportunity to realise communities' needs, while land-use changes prioritise community consultation over financial speculation.
- Building materials are re-used and recycled responsibly.
- No-one is forcibly evicted from their home, in accordance with international standards.

## Leverage Across the Built Environment



This infographic conveys the continuum of human rights risk and responsibility across the built environment lifecycle, the inter-relatedness of the actors, and points of leverage between them. The distribution of power between these actors largely determines the nature of the built environment - and whether it responds only to narrow financial interests or also to the needs of residents, particularly the most vulnerable.

## Recommendations

Implementing this Framework for Action will involve action by a range of actors, in cooperation with others and cognisant of the wider context in which they are operating. The actions below summarise important steps by actors across the built environment lifecycle that will help to realise the Framework.

As a starting point, all actors should adhere to international human rights standards, and the [United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#). All actors must also avoid corruption.



### **National governments:**

- Commit and adhere to international human rights standards;
- Ensure co-ordination between agencies and regions for effective and equitable urban planning, disaster preparation and response;
- Ensure responsible investment in the built environment;
- Require responsible conduct of nationally headquartered companies operating overseas;
- Promote human rights in regional and international fora.



### **Architecture and design firms:**

- Design with the rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups and neighbouring areas in mind;
- Engage local communities in a meaningful way from the outset of any project and throughout its lifecycle;
- Take the human rights record of clients into account when deciding to accept a contract and use any leverage over clients proactively to advance human rights;
- Support policy initiatives that strengthen dignity in the built environment.



### **Local governments:**

- Protect human rights through the adoption and enforcement of laws and policies, as well as measures to ensure accountability and transparency;
- Maximise residents' participation in the decisions that affect their lives;
- Consider the full spectrum of rights and full geography of the urban area in planning and zoning decisions;
- Ensure that investment is channeled in the public interest.



### **Construction and engineering companies:**

- Ensure respect for all workers' rights in direct operations and throughout the subcontracting chain;
- Ensure women have equal access to employment and training;
- Avoid corruption and conduct due diligence on all business partners;
- Source materials with consideration for their social and environmental impacts;
- Mitigate disruption to local communities during the construction process;
- Ensure that buildings are environmentally resilient and structurally safe.



### **Investors and developers:**

- Ensure responsible investment that is closely aligned with locally-defined priorities and adds value to the communities where it is deployed;
- Shift investment away from an "extractive" approach that is focused narrowly on short-term profit-maximisation and proactively engage companies on human rights risks and impacts.



### **Technology companies:**

- Respect digital rights, including the rights to privacy and freedom of expression;
- Seek to expand access to the benefits of technological innovation in urban areas;
- Ensure transparency, accountability and non-discrimination in the collection and use of data.



### **Building maintenance and servicing companies**

- Ensure that all workers' rights are respected – including those employed by subcontractors – in the maintenance, servicing, cleaning and security of buildings;
- Respect the rights of those using buildings.

## International Standards and Guidelines

The Framework draws on the following international standards and guidelines.

### International human rights standards

- The full spectrum of **United Nations standards** on human rights: including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- International Labour Organization (ILO) **conventions and standards**. ILO fundamental conventions encompass freedom of association and the right to organise, forced and child labour, equal remuneration, and non-discrimination.
- The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: **Guiding Principles** for the implementation of the “Protect, Respect and Remedy” framework on business and human rights

### Human rights standards by issue

- **Women**: Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- **Children**: Convention on the Rights of the Child
- **People with Disabilities**: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- **Indigenous Peoples**: UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- **Migrant Workers**: International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
- **Land**: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) resources on land as a cross-cutting issue that impacts directly on the enjoyment of a number of rights
- **Forced Evictions**: OHCHR resources on forced evictions
- **Adequate Housing**: OHCHR Right to Adequate Housing Toolkit
- **Infrastructure**: OHCHR resources on the **right to water and sanitation**
- **Health**: OHCHR resources on the right to physical and mental health
- **Privacy**: OHCHR resources on the right to privacy in the digital age

### Global frameworks and guidelines

- **UN Sustainable Development Goals**
- **New Urban Agenda**
- **OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises**
- **UN Global Compact**
- **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Prevention**
- **International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning** (UN Habitat)

- **UN Principles for Responsible Investment**
- **Equator Principles**
- **International Finance Corporation Performance Standards**
- **Global Reporting Initiative Standards**
- **Building Responsibly Worker Welfare Principles**
- **Dhaka Principles for Migration with Dignity** (Institute for Human Rights and Business)
- **Mega-Sporting Event Lifecycle** (Institute for Human Rights and Business)
- **Accord on Recommended International Standards of Professionalism in Architectural Practice** (International Union of Architects)
- **Children's Rights and Business Principles** (UNICEF, Save the Children, UN Global Compact)

## Human Rights Cities

- **Global Charter Agenda for Human Rights in the City**
- **European Charter for Human Rights in the City**
- **Gwangju Guiding Principles for a Human Rights City**

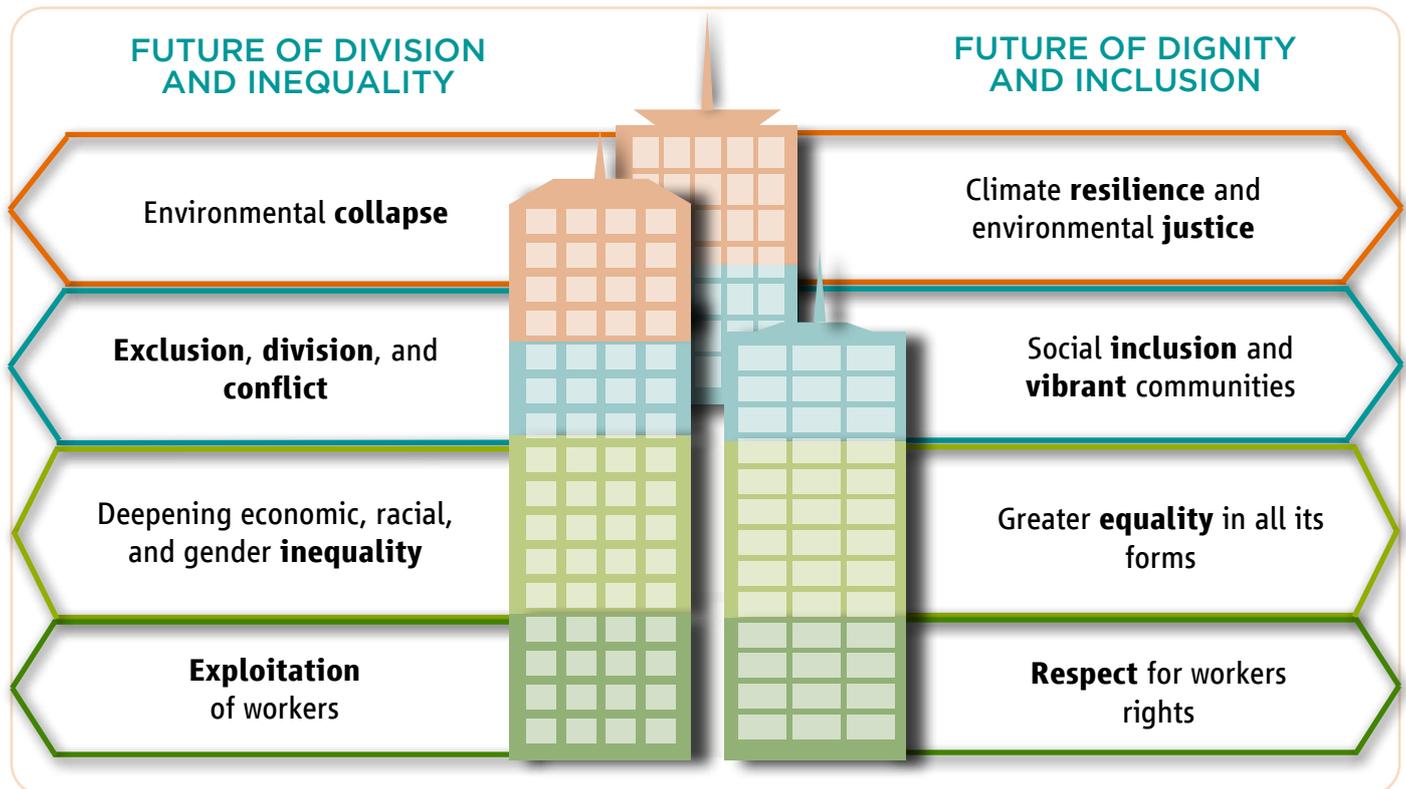
## Thematic city-level initiatives

- **Cities for Housing** / The Municipalist Declaration of Local Governments on the Right to Housing and the Right to the City
- **Child-friendly cities** (UNICEF)
- **Global age-friendly cities** (WHO)
- **Safe Cities and Safe Public Places** (UN Women)
- **Cities Coalition for Digital Rights**

## Reports

- **Dignity by Design: Human Rights and the Built Environment Lifecycle (July 2019)** provides a mapping of human rights issues throughout the built environment lifecycle, and examples of existing initiatives.
- **Better Building(s) – Human rights and decarbonisation of buildings in Europe (May 2021)** provides examples and recommendations for investors and policy-makers in six areas, relating to the social dimensions of building decarbonisation: Housing; Workers' Rights; Health; Participation; Non-discrimination; and Technology.

The built environment – the places where we live, work, and interact with others – has a defining influence over our ability to lead healthy, fulfilling lives, and over the future we will create.



Achieving a future of dignity and inclusion requires an approach that is firmly based in human rights. Internationally-recognised human rights encompass civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, which are indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

Governments must create mechanisms of accountability for the enforcement of rights. Not only must rights be recognized in law and policy, but there must also be effective measures in place to hold governments accountable if the standards are not met – and for governments to hold third parties such as private sector actors accountable.

### PARTICIPATION

People have a right to participate in how decisions are made regarding protection of their rights. Governments must engage and support the participation of civil society. Within the built environment this means that individual residents and communities must have clear avenues to have a say over the present and future of their neighbourhoods. Companies must consult local communities and other stakeholders prior to and during any project.



### TRANSPARENCY

Transparency means providing information about decision-making processes related to rights, so that people know and understand how major decisions affecting rights are made.

### NON-DISCRIMINATION

Human rights are universal. They must be afforded to everyone, without exception, and guaranteed without discrimination of any kind. This includes not only purposeful discrimination, but also protection from policies and practices which may have a discriminatory effect. Within the real estate, design and construction industries, non-discrimination applies to the context of their operations, and also to the recruitment, retention and advancement of employees.