On World Cities Day 2020, UN-Habitat promoted the theme “Valuing our communities and cities,” as a moment to reflect on our cities and consider their future. In response to this call for local action and knowledge sharing, Healthy Cities for Adolescents (HCA) Program Director Joyati Das moderated a panel of seven young people from diverse urban settings who shared their ideas and solutions. These representatives from HCA projects and UN-Habitat Youth Leaders reflected on the cities they live in, how their communities are responding to the COVID-19 crisis, and called for their governments to seriously consider the contribution of young people in achieving sustainable change.

Launching the discussion, Joyati celebrated the community of young people as equal partners to progress sustainable organisation that leaves no one behind. She highlighted the power of young people as active participants to mobilise action from local to global bringing change and promoting inclusion. The webinar provided a platform for attendees to listen to youth-led innovative solutions and celebrate youth leadership in the promotion of health and wellbeing as explained in SDG 3, and progressing implementation of SDG 11 that calls for safe, inclusive and sustainable cities.
The panel received a special message from UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif recognizing their leadership, commitment, and vision for the future. Additionally, Pontus Westerberg of UN-Habitat Innovation team presented a selection of the winning submissions of the Future Cities Challenge, a joint initiative of UN-Habitat and Fondation Botnar, which invited young people globally to submit innovative ideas about the future city they want to live in. Mr. Westerberg, who served as a judge on the panel, said he was “inspired by the breadth of creative ideas on how to make our future cities more sustainable, inclusive, participatory, and fun.” The full list of winners are available on the Fondation Botnar website.

The event served as the inaugural conversation on HCA’s newly launched knowledge platform where a Community of Practice for young people and their partners is established to enable the sharing of ideas and experiences globally. The HCA team is pleased that the voices of young people from different parts of the globe were included in the World Cities Day dialogue. A recording of the webinar is available on the Cities 4 Adolescents Community of Practice, and you can find select quotes and calls for action from the panelists below.

**Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN-Habitat**
“*In informal settlements and slums, young men and women have taken on leadership roles in their communities and are grappling with the additional hardships created by COVID-19 and making a significant contribution to local responses.*”

**Vũ Văn Nguyên, Youth Representative, Da Nang, Vietnam**
“When youth lack positive outlets and healthy self esteem they turn to drugs. National leaders need to establish national educational campaigns and organize meaningful activities for youth to participate in such as volunteering, arts, personal development, and skills training so young people can be better informed and build healthy lifestyles.”

**Sai Preethi, Youth Representative, Hyderabad, India**
“All of us got locked down and had to stay home. Covid-19 has created a lot of uncertainty. People were scared other people had the virus so we were scared to see each other. We need compassion and unity.”

**Serigne Mountakha Mbacke Thiam, Youth Representative, Thies, Senegal**
“Young people have contributed to the capacity building capabilities through community led action. In my city we sensitized citizens to pandemic information through home visits. They have also helped increase support from the Mayor of Thies and several organizations.”
Najat Jibreel, Youth Representative, Tamale, Ghana
“The most important issue leaders should address are the high rates of school dropouts and teenage pregnancy. Youth dropout of school for many reasons, but most prominently because of poverty. Leaders should allocate budgets to help youth and transform them into better citizens by bringing them back to school and connecting them to economic opportunities.”

Isaac Muasa, Co-Founder, Mathare Environmental Conservation Youth Group and UN Youth Leader, Nairobi, Kenya
“We mobilized young people to fight the pandemic, and implemented hand washing stations in our community and have washed more than 2 million hands. We also created murals to spread information and distributed masks. I want the government to believe in young people because they have the ideas that work and manpower to make these ideas come true.”

Juan David Uribe, Youth Representative, Cali, Colombia
“We need to focus on shared responsibility. As a community we realised duty lies not only with the government, nor only with the community. Success lies in working together, and we have to support each other.”

Shamoy Hajare, CEO, Radicle Global and UN Youth Leader, Kingston, Jamaica
Covid has taught us that the future is not through national action but community-led action. It is in the community that we see the value of young people. Young people have the ideas, innovation, and technical know-how, and leaders need to realize young people have the skills they are looking for, and integrate them into the systems that are actually creating change.”