



# Rockefeller Foundation Builds Resilience For New Urban Agenda

Not surprisingly, the Rockefeller Foundation is a major player in Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda. David Rockefeller co-founded the Trilateral Commission in 1973 with Zbigniew Brzezinski, which committed to create a New International Economic Order (NIEO). The NIEO has found its expression in the United Nation's Sustainable Development, or Green Economy, program. □ TN Editor

As urban leaders meet in Quito this week for [Habitat III](#), the gathering marks the 20-year anniversary of the second Habitat conference, and the 40-year anniversary of the first. In between each of these historic events, we haven't simply turned the pages of the calendar. An entire generation has come of age. A technological revolution has unlocked the possibilities of a connected, interdependent world. And our urban population has rapidly increased, from 38 percent in 1976, to 45 percent in 1996, to 55 percent this year.

In some ways, our cities today face the same challenges they always have—from short-term shocks, like floods, fires, conflict, and disease—to

long-term stresses, like poverty, inequality, strains on infrastructure, and scarcity of natural resources. **But today—amid the intersecting forces of urbanization, globalization, and climate change—these disruptions come faster, stay longer, and have the potential to become full-blown crises at a moment’s notice.**

To meet these threats head-on, our cities must build resilience: the capacity not just to survive when a disaster strikes, but to adapt and thrive. Just as vaccines are more effective than last-minute treatments, and fortifying a home is cheaper than repairing damages caused by an earthquake or a flood, investing in resilience can generate a return of much greater value.

A US federal agency estimates that **every dollar spent on preparing for a disaster saves four dollars down the road.** Building resilience is the smart—indeed, the only—way for the world’s cities to confront the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We need only look at the sheer scale of these challenges to understand that investing in our future will require *working together*, across borders and across sectors. All of the philanthropy, development, and aid budgets in the world total billions of dollars—but addressing the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will cost *trillions*. To bridge this gap, governments, businesses, and NGOs must form new partnerships, and think creatively about the future.

The Rockefeller Foundation has invested more than half a billion dollars over the past 11 years in resilience. This funding has leveraged \$25 billion in known investments and commitments for building resilience from government, the private sector, and NGOs. And through our **[Zero Gap](#)** initiative, we have supported innovative financing mechanisms to leverage private-sector partnerships for resilience-building efforts—from micro-levy-based models, to new insurance mechanisms, to social impact bonds. What we’ve seen is that innovative financing for urban resilience pays off. Not just for the city in question—but also for its businesses, its communities, and its citizens.

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