Cities Alliance
Cities Without Slums

Cities Alliance Management Response and Action Plan
Evaluation Title: Mid-Term Evaluation Report, Cities Alliance Liberia Country Programme

Overall Response to Evaluation Report

Cities Alliance welcomes this substantive evaluation of the Comic Relief funded Liberia Country Programme. The evaluation reached across the system of Programme stakeholders and gathered detailed information and identified results from close to 1,000 people - from community savings groups, petty traders, households, the street vendor federation, housing finance institutions, national government officials, and city Mayors and Township commissioners. The considerable efforts made during the evaluation to engage programme participants and partners in both quantitative and qualitative data collection and feedback are greatly appreciated and have provided the Programme with valuable information and independent insight for the next phase.

Cities Alliance is pleased to note that the evaluation confirmed that the design of the programme is to a large extent effective and progress towards intended outcomes is overall on track. The evaluation identified emerging systemic results, including generating shifts in perceptions of the role of the city in the economy; an increased recognition of slum dwellers as citizens; strengthened municipalities who are increasingly engaging citizens; and informal settlements 'being put on the map'. Further, the evaluation recognised that addressing the challenges facing slum communities necessitates comprehensive multi-sectoral and multi stakeholder approaches and concluded that, despite some delay, the programme is delivering on this model.

This management response to the evaluations' conclusion and recommendations, which Cities Alliance overall accepts, will track the implementation of actions to address them. Key recommendations which are seen as critical to Programme impact include strengthening the partnerships model – in particular the coordination of implementing partners and stronger leadership by Cities Alliance - and addressing identified weaknesses, which have delayed a number of Programme components; as well the critical need to implement more Community Upgrading Fund (CUF) projects in the affected communities. The evaluation did raise some questions regarding the efficiency of the partnerships model, which Cities Alliance accept and is considering. Identified opportunities to extend partnerships and increase the visibility of the Cities Alliance are under consideration. The management response has also addressed the more operational focused recommendations – relating to Monitoring and Evaluation, the Community Upgrading Fund, City Development Strategy, and planned capacity strengthening for local government.

Cities Alliance values this pause for reflection and invited the Programme partners to undertake a similar process and response to their specific recommendations. Their documents responses follow the Cities Alliance response below.

Response to Recommendations and Action Plan

Overall Recommendations[1] Cities Alliance	Accepted or Rejected	Comments	Actions
Direct livelihood interventions: The Programme places emphasis on improving the quality of life, jobs and socio-economic conditions of slum dwellers as key in slum upgrading and building resilient communities. However, building resilient communities is highly associated with improved livelihood outcomes. Therefore, creating conditions which not only improve the housing and living condition but also the economic prospects is key in slum and urban upgrading Programmes. While providing safe and secure work spaces and improved working environment is intended to strengthen urban poor livelihoods, there is need for the Programme to focus on direct livelihood interventions at community level.	Partially Rejected	The project was mainly designed to improve life, jobs and socio-economic conditions of the urban poor by creating an enabling working environment for the urban poor through development of and implementation of policies, guidelines, frameworks, upgrading initiatives, community-based infrastructure projects, capacity building to negotiate with relevant stakeholders, acquisition of secure trading space rather than direct livelihood interventions recommended by the consultant. This recommendation is however useful and has been implemented in some of the programme activities such as establishment of community saving groups (256 saving groups established) and the Community Upgrading Fund projects where the livelihood component has been embedded in the 6 water kiosks constructed. The EU funded programme has leveraged this initiative by providing loans and grants to Community Based Enterprises and Small and Medium Enterprises	1. Include a livelihood component where possible in future Community Upgrading fund. 2. Leverage this recommendation with the EU- funded programme.
Ministry of Finance Engagement: Working directly with government agencies, City Corporations and local government is an important long-term sustainability strategy for Programme interventions. This presents an opportunity for integration of Programme pieces into City and Sector Development Plans and frameworks. For government financing, these should be incorporated into budget framework papers, approved by the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Finance is therefore a vital stakeholder that the Programme should be engaging to strategically position certain Programme elements for incorporation in budget framework papers for possible funding when the Programme ends.	Accepted	Cities Alliance agrees with this recommendation and engagement with the Ministry of Finance will be initiated, however integration of the country programme initiatives in the National Development plan may be a longer-term objective.	1. Involve the Ministry of Finance in the Programme Steering Committee. 2. Extend invitation to the ministry to participate in programme City wide and National forums
Effectiveness of Partnership Model: Attainment of full-scale results in the remaining period requires partners to up their efforts and be on top of implementation with minimal bureaucracies and delays. This necessitates stronger management, leadership and coordination from Cities Alliance considering partners are not on ground. Therefore, monthly	Partially Accepted	Cities Alliance agrees with this recommendation and will move forward with monthly partner meetings. However, the evaluation also highlighted the importance of all partners having an in-country presence and Cities Alliance wholly endorses this recommendation.	Monthly Cities Alliance individual partner meetings adopted.

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[1] Recommendation for Cities Alliance from the Report Executive Summary.

individual Cities Alliance-to-partner meetings should be initiated in addition to the existing coordination structures. This will enable maximization of operational efficiencies, ensure systemic planning and focused support to partners to deliver their outcomes.			
Branding and visibility: Cities Alliance's visibility remains weak despite changes in the mode of operation that intended to increase the institution's visibility. At Community level, credit, success and impact for community investments are attributed to local implementing partners, with minimal recognition of the funding entity. There is need to implement sharper visibility strategies – likely developing a visibility and communication plan for better recognition, creating identity and positioning the institution as a leading player in transformation of cities and slum communities. All Programme investments, resources, materials, signages etc. should be branded (including partners) with Comic Relief and Cities Alliance logos to increase visibility. Best practices can be adopted from organizations with strong visibility such as USAID.	Accepted	Cities Alliance agrees with this recommendation however there is no budget allocation for communication and visibility. This is however a good recommendation that Cities Alliance is currently implementing. A communication and visibility officer has been recruited to improve programme branding and visibility.	1. Development of Country Programme branding guidelines. 2. Development of a country programme communication and visibility plan.
Contracting: The finding that some partners are expending funds based on achievement of agreed deliverables in the contract while others after elapse of a certain period regardless of their deliverables is a rare programming practice. The Programming landscape has immensely changed due to demand for results, accountability and performance. Therefore, future contracting processes should ensure consistence and uniformity in contract design across partners – with focus on deliverable or output-based contracting.	Accepted	Cities Alliance agrees with this recommendation. Despite disbursement of payments based on time frame, Cities Alliance initiates a review of each partners deliverables before any disbursement is made. Measures including a task manager report that clearly indicates the deliverables and the quality of outputs submitted by the partners is compiled by the country office, reviewed by the secretariat before disbursement. However, this approach has now changed to deliverable based disbursement.	1. Award of only deliverable based grants to partners moving forward.
Theory of Change: The Programme has a well-developed Theory of change (TOC) with clear representation of how the Programme is expected to achieve the intended results. However, for the theory to provide a more logical and reasonable description of why Programme activities shall lead to the intended results or benefits, the following recommendations are proposed; ✓ Intermediate outcome 3.1 about the development of the City Development Strategy is better suited to contribute to intermediate outcome 4 "National and city level policy, planning and legislative environment for resilient and inclusive urbanization benefits recognition and voice of the urban poor."	Accepted	Cities Alliance fully accepts these recommendations and has already redesigned the Theory of Change and Results Framework for the programme.	Completed

✓ The theory needs to identify the underlying assumptions, events or conditions that may affect achieving the Programmes outcomes. Assumptions about causes and effects within the Programme are not highlight. These assumptions are critical in Evaluating the Programme performance.			
Monitoring and Evaluation: To further strengthen M&E, its best practice that all partners have staff fully dedicated for M&E. The Evaluation observes that only a handful partners have M&E staff. This affects the quality of partner reports but also partly explains reporting delays observed from partners. In future contracting processes, having a dedicated M&E staff should be a pre-requisite prior the grant award.	Accepted	Cities Alliance will require future CP Liberia partners to have dedicated M&E staff, depending on the size and complexity of the grant.	This recommendation can not be adopted during the current Programme but will be considered for future partnerships.
Indicators: The Programme has too many indicators tracked, with a sizable number not related to the Programme result areas while others are not clear about what type of change is implied. There is need to be dropped some indicators and retain only those that are appropriate and useful in measuring the envisaged change. Indicators recommended for dropping are highlighted in the Section 5.8.	Accepted	Cities Alliance has had discussions with Comic Relief to have some indicators dropped. A list of proposed Cities Alliance and Mid-term evaluation consultant indicators to be dropped will be shared and discussed with Comic Relief.	1. Present a list of indictors to be dropped for approval by Comic Relief
Piloting building materials: Considering the Programme did not provide for testing and piloting of the low-cost research-based building material - once production is scaled-up, I recommend that Cities Alliance directs at least one or two CUF projects in form of community Halls, toilet or any new construction projects make use of these new material to pilot and test them, and demonstrate to communities that the technology and innovations works and is scalable.	Partially accepted	Cities Alliance partially accepts the recommendation however the technology can not be piloted through the CUF projects without being tested to assess if the materials meet acceptable construction standards.	1. This recommendation may not be adopted during this current programme unless the materials are tested and proven to meet construction standards.
Other Recommendations[2]	Accepted or Rejected	Comments	Actions
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL): The design and coherence of the Programme MEL structure needs to be enhanced, partner M&E systems should feed into the Programme MEL system. Cities Alliance should take overall leadership in the Programme M&E. MEL tools and frameworks used by partners should be with approval from Cities Alliance to ensure that data collection is consistent with procedures and definitions set out in the MEL Plan.	Accepted	Cities Alliance agrees with this recommendation and notes its significance for all Country Programme partners and grantees.	Cities Alliance to strengthen its coordination and leadership on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning efforts for all Country Programmes. Cities Alliance maintains a centralised MEL plan for CP

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[2] Recommendation for Cities Alliance from other sections of the Evaluation Report.

			Liberia and will ensure effective coordination.
Increase budgetary allocation for M&E activities for Country Programme.			
Relationship with Monrovia City Corporation (MCC): There is a need to manage expectations for better and stronger relationships. Where possible have an MOU with MCC clearly highlighting roles, responsibilities and mandate of MCC regarding the country programme. There is need for FEPTIWUL and Cities Alliance to continue engaging city leadership to resolve outstanding issues. Recommended is the involvement of the Programme Steering Committee in these negotiations.	Partially accepted	The transition of the city corporation leadership from the previous mayor to the current mayor has created bottlenecks for implementation of the country programme. The city Corporation believes they should be an implementing partner rather than a beneficiary. Cities Alliance partially agrees with the recommendation however several strides to reach out to the mayor of Monrovia and his leadership have not been fruitful.	1. Engagement of the Programme Steering Committee to solve outstanding issues.
WIEGO			
Signing of the MOU with PCC: City authorities highlight an MOU won't be signed until there is a structure built for the traders and traders relocated to this structure. There is a need to continuously engage PCC leadership on this**.**	Accepted.	MoU is needed precisely to facilitate negotiations on the relocation issue. Unilateral relocation (*which has failed up to now*) cannot be a **precondition** to having an MoU. Engagement with PCC officials is already ongoing. Resistance to formalising this is coming from PCC Mayor.	1.Discusse the traders' relationship with PCC at the PSC meeting. 2. PSC to provide a platform for the two institutions to table a discussion.
Formal agreements for Traders: FEPTIWUL should work with city authorities to provide traders formal agreements permitting them to operate in allocated space. Providing traders agreements to operate in allocated trading space improves security of their business.	Accepted.	Again, establishing the regular negotiations (i.e. monthly meetings which would be provided for in the MoU) is the channel to get this work going with the City authorities.	PSC and Cities Alliance to convince PCC leadership to start the negotiations for the MoU so that they can sign the MoU and start the monthly meetings.
Updating the database for Petty traders in Greater Monrovia: Lack of an up to date database affects planning for the traders including negotiating more trading space with the cities authorities and the government. Evidence based planning and programming required timely and up-to-date data.	Accepted	The process of member registration was halted by MCC hence contributing this effect.	Updating of membership registration in January 2020 with support from MCC.
Sanitation and Hygiene: Although improvements are visible in garbage collection and disposal, a lot of litter is still observed across all markets.	Not accepted	Sanitation and hygiene is the responsibility of the city – not FEPTIWUL, StreetNet or WIEGO. This issue was raised by FEPTIWUL in 2018 who offered to negotiate with MCC about providing services for a fee but were informed this was not their responsibility.	MCC and PCC to negotiate with FEPTIWUL during the course of their monthly meetings about any services they require from the federation
FEPTIWUL coordination with traders: Only 60% of the traders had attended meetings with FEPTIWUL to discuss their issues related to their working conditions, this was however much lower in Red-Light market (56%).	Accepted	60%, or even 56%, attendance at meetings is exceptionally high. This is a sector which normally (globally) has much lower levels of attendance at meetings.	No action required, other than to try to maintain the current high attendance rate.

Although this improved from 43% at baseline, the federation needs to enhance this further.			
Record management: Supporting members (traders) to improve records management and documentation practices and helping them to understand the value in keeping and maintaining records. This will enhance business growth processes through recapitalization because of taking good stock of business transactions.	Rejected	This is a good initiative however it can be incorporated in future programmes.	Project Steering Committee to identify who should be approached to run such training and how to finance it.
Savings Groups: Establishing or strengthening "Cash Round Groups" commonly known as SUSU to enhance access to finance and credit for the traders. With the traders having less interest in borrowing from MFIs, the federation should support traders to establish or strengthen SUSUs to help traders to mobilize resources to expand their business enterprises.	Rejected	While we agree this is a good idea, it is not accepted within the framework of this project. This is another technical support area. If an opportunity to run a SUSU scheme for petty traders is available, FEPTIWUL would cooperate fully in such a project.	This can be factored in future projects.
Slum Dweller International (SDI), FOLUPS & YMCA Liberia			
Savings Groups Scale Up: Scaling-up the spread of Savings Groups in all communities that have been profiled by the Programme. Results from the Evaluation indicate that Savings Groups are concentrated in a few communities and not in other LGAs.	Accepted	As per Phase I grant agreement the target was to establish 200 savings groups. This target was exceeded, with a total of 256 active savings groups established during Phase I of the Programme.	FOLUPS will continue to engage and mobilize additional savings groups in other communities during Phase II of the programme. These will be communities that have been profiled, had settlement forums and are planning for CUF projects.
Strengthening systems and structure for FOLUPS Saving groups: Groups lack operational tools, manuals and procedures for running their day-to-day business.	Rejected	FOLUPS is a federation of savings groups. During the past three years a number of operational tools and procedures have been developed to support both the savings groups and federation. Within each savings group there are standard practices and tools used for the day to day running of groups. These resources include: • Updated member savings books • Group savings & loan registers • List of group members and contact info • Standard savings group structure including Chair, treasurer and secretary • Support from YMCA to open group bank accounts At the Federation (FOLUPS) level, resource materials include: • Reporting forms for mobilizers • Draft FOLUPS constitution • Templates for meeting minutes	Although the groups and federation have standard tools and procedures there is a need for additional training to ensure that more members are acquainted with these tools and procedures.

		• Excel data sheet for tracking savings groups	
Finalizing sustainability plans for the CUF infrastructure projects: The infrastructure projects constructed through the CUF are yet to be commissioned for use by the community. The commissioning has been delayed due to completing development of the sustainability plans by YMCA and Communities. Consultation with key partners is ongoing to complete the process. This needs to be expedited.	Accepted	Sustainability plans for CUF projects had not been initially part of Phase I of the grant. YMCA/FOLUPS commenced CUF sustainability plans upon signing of Phrase II grant.	Sustainability plans for pilot projects completed. Sustainability plans for new projects under Phase II will be developed at the beginning of the construction process.
FOLUPS: Strengthening operational and accountability systems for FOLUPS.	Rejected	Accountability is an ongoing process, saving group members are gradually taking leadership to ensure they catalogue members' dues and other related payments. The federation now has a bank account, and most of its members savings group have open bank account with the Liberia Bank for Development and Investment (LBDI).	During Phase II there will be ongoing engagement with savings group members to enhance and share learning and encourage new groups to open bank account. FOLUPS will also continue to be supported by the larger SDI network through regional hub meetings and exchanges.
Forum Space: Institutionalising forum space such as the settlement and city-wide forums, so that at settlement level for instance, projects funded through CUF are highly participatory from the community and there is inclusiveness and ownership.	Rejected	The YMCA and FOLUPS have created a safe space for community members to interact through women led saving groups activities. Settlement forums has been a significant part of the profile process since 2017. It has also been initiated during CUF inception meetings to ensure greater inclusions of all stakeholders as well as ensuring that community decision are inclusive, tailoring to their needs.	The process is currently ongoing in the profiled LGAs.
Awareness, Education and Sensitization: While the Programme is making strides in addressing Sanitation and Hygiene issues in communities, challenges still remain. Focus should be on consolidating gains made so far and complementing them with awareness, education and sensitization of communities on best practices of WASH. Strides made will yield better results and impact if communities' behaviours, attitudes and practices regarding sanitation are given due attention. There is need to adopt Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) as a strategy for promoting positive and sustainable practices and behaviours at community level to promote better practices and behaviours towards sanitation and hygiene.	Accepted	Most of the awareness and engagement activities were conducted in Phase I of the project. Under the Phase II, we have limited support provided to saving groups for said activities as the request was to focus the majority of efforts and funds on CUF projects. However, savings group members are accustom to these processes and have taken initiative to collaborate with other service provider to continue the process.	FOLUPS members will support other related community initiatives to create awareness in the communities.
UN Habitat			

National Urban Policy: This should be the major area of focus for UN Habitat. However, the Evaluation has also learnt that there is only a single person supporting the development of the policy (consultant) who is also part-time as he has other engagements with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and also at the Ministry of Public Works. There is a need to have a full dedicated consultant, who is full time on this policy given clear deliverables and timelines to work with if the Programme is to achieve this outcome.	Partially Rejected	1. The Phase 2 of this component of the project will deliver amongst other the regional reports, a National Urban Forum, Capacity Building, and the national Diagnostic report. The training and diagnostic reports are the only pending deliverables under the current phase rather than all the five phases highlighted in the report. 2. The Process of developing the national Urban Policy is complex and required a set of skills. To that effects and based on needs and progress made; at the time the report was prepared, the UN-Habitat team in Liberia had one national consultant and the process of recruiting an intern and volunteer were in the final stages. 3. The National Consultant works at the ministry of Public Works but was seconded to the Ministry of Internal Affairs to support the Urban Policy Process.	1. Clarifications had been provided on the scope of the assignment and deliverables for phase two; 2. Updated work plan had been prepared 3. Two regional Notes had been submitted 4. The UN-Habitat team in Liberia has three people: a full-time staff, one intern and one long term consultant; The team in Liberia is working in close collaboration with other team members based in Nairobi; 5. One additional consultant will be hired to finalise and curate the remaining outputs of the diagnostic phase;
Habitat for Humanity International			
Engaging Foundation for Women: HFIH to move faster in fully engaging Foundation for women to enhance the housing microfinance environment and to support the development of housing products relevant for low income communities.	Not Accepted	HFHI has engaged Foundation For Women and a capacity building workshop convened.	Further capacity building efforts are underway.
Housing Products: Sign an MOU with lead-firm and work with firms to develop suitable housing products that low-income communities can utilize to build their homes incrementally.	Accepted	MoU for 3rd LF scheduled to be finalised Nov-Dec 2019; Activity Delayed but ongoing	Finalize MOU with 3rd FSP
Voluntary Gender Responsive and Relocation Guidelines: HFHI-NHA to work with Cities Alliance to finalise the guidelines for adoption by government.	Accepted	This is on track. Presentation of final guidelines to LCP Steering Committee & Approval is expected to occur by end of December 2019	Dissemination of the policy guideline.
Participatory Approach to Safe Shelter Awareness (PASSA): Implementation of Community infrastructure projects through the PASSA approach at Peace Island.	Accepted	Priority projects have been identified: - The community hall's design has been reviewed by technical teams. - Construction of Community Waste Holding RC Bin – funded under the OFID grant - is at final stages. - Design and diagrams for Biogas digester Toilet facility – also funded by OFID – were completed. pending BoQ and compliance approvals. - Need to proceed with a revision of MOU with NHA expanding implementation roles to support construction activities.	- Environmental and Social Impact Examination (ESIE) for community hall is planned next quarter- December 2019 - February 2020 - BOQs for Biogas digester Toilet facility are being finalized - Revised MOU with NHA

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