

# NO ONE WORSE OFF?

## The role of Environmental and Social Safeguards for Resilient Infrastructure Projects in Cities



**Cities Alliance**  
Cities Without Slums

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## A Cities Alliance Report | Synopsis

Cities around the world are the main drivers of trade and local development. The population growth patterns of cities are significant and vigorous; in the case of sub-Saharan Africa, as the world's fastest-growing urbanizing region, the urban population is projected to double in the next 25 years, with most of the growth occurring through informal settlements.



**The central question is whether the safeguards in place work effectively in the context of the urban poor, infrastructure development and climate change. Are they consistent in approach, adaptable, feasible and practical in the context of informality?"**

With this continuing trend, adequate infrastructure to respond to urbanisation needs is key; the global investment demand today for urban infrastructure is around 5 trillion USD annually.

As the impacts of a changing climate are felt stronger in cities, the ways in which major

infrastructure in urban areas are planned need to change: Cities need resilient environmental, social, and economic systems that can withstand anticipated shocks and stresses, particularly when experienced through the eyes of the urban poor.

The report provides key inputs for future operations and policy dialogues of the Cities Alliance Partnership and illustrate that environmental and social impact assessments can help address informality in cities, as well as increase greater resilience of entire cities to the various impacts of climate change.

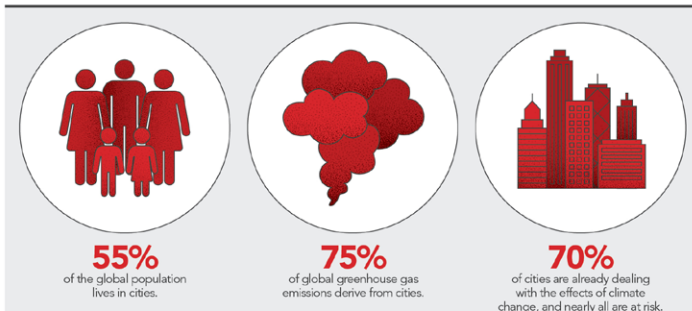


**Those living, often illegally, in informal settlements deal with the consequences of planning decisions that affect them, precisely because they lack land title rights and business rights. "**

Climate Change and Cities

## Cities Are the Cause and the Solution

Cities need improved planning to host growing populations, curb emissions and become more sustainable, build resilience, and reduce vulnerability to anticipated shocks and stresses.



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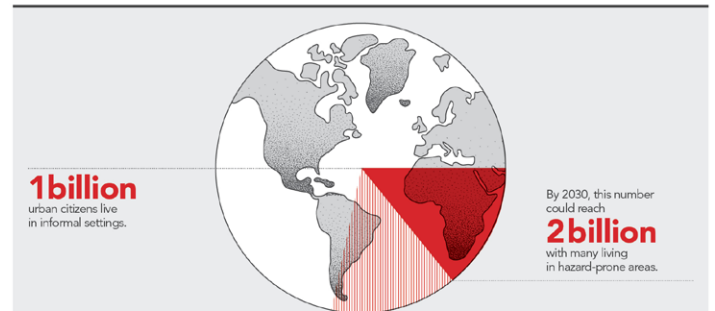
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Climate Change and Cities

## Informal Settlements

In general, city dwellers live in areas most prone to the effects of climate change.

The people who contribute the least to climate change will be impacted the most by its effects.



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# Main Findings

- A thorough application of safeguards struggles to account for and address two major points: adequate **accounting for climate-induced trends** and **protection of those vulnerable citizens living in informal housing in precarious locations** with little or no access to basic services.
- The national environmental and social impact assessment laws and regulations regarding climate change and informality are often insufficient and limited in effectiveness.
- There are some **weaknesses inherent in the approach, application and practice of existing safeguards due to limited institutional capacity, inadequate financial resources and ineffective application of legal instruments.**
- Institutional and legal strengthening is required to ensure that national environmental and social safeguards are more robust.



Challenges to the effectiveness of safeguard instruments include missing guidance on climate change risk assessment, a lack of inclusion and a definition of the term 'social' in much of the legislation.”



# Recommendations

- Safeguard implementation would benefit from an earlier involvement of Development Finance Institutions in the assessment processes to ensure an adequate implementation of planning, monitoring and auditing processes.
- **Further quality assurance and control** in the post-environmental social impact assessment phases of project implementation and operation is strongly recommended, as well as an improved usage of **Strategic Environmental Assessments**.
- With national governments often being unable to fund such studies, Development Finance Institutions **need to increase their support of governments to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessments for large infrastructure development programmes within urban areas in parallel with overall city planning**. The use of Strategic Environmental Assessment is particularly effective in urban environments, as it gives urban residents a 'say' in how their city develops in an integrated, sustainable and people-centred manner.



Strategic Environmental Assessments are a range of analytical and participatory approaches that aim to integrate environmental considerations into policies, plans and programmes and evaluate the inter-linkages with economic and social considerations.”



Federal Ministry  
for Economic Cooperation  
and Development

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