

Future Cities Africa Workshop Highlights Cities' Efforts to Bolster Resilience

Through Future Cities Africa, Cities Alliance is encouraging us to reflect on how we strengthen ownership at the local level and how we develop cities with inclusivity, especially gender and those most disadvantaged, in mind." --The Hon. Isaac Ashai Odamtten, Metropolitan Chief Executive of Tema, Ghana

The Future Cities Africa programme reached a milestone on 11 and 12 June when all its key actors came together for the first time since the programme was launched by Cities Alliance and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in December 2014.

The Global Knowledge Sharing Workshop in Brussels, the first knowledge sharing event to be held as part of the Future Cities Africa programme, was organised by the Cities Alliance Secretariat to discuss progress and share knowledge emerging during Phase 1 of the programme.

Future Cities Africa is supported by DFID, which has allocated USD 7.5 million (GBP 4.81 million), and Cities Alliance. Future Cities Africa supports select cities in four African countries to anticipate and minimise future risks in terms of climate change, environment and natural resources - essentially giving them the tools to "future proof" themselves so that they will be inclusive, resilient and have growing job creating economies.

The workshop highlighted just how successful the Future Cities Africa programme has been at building a strong sense of ownership at the national, city and community level around increasing resilience. With its emphasis on partnership and dialogue, the Future Cities Africa programme is specifically designed to foster ownership and bring all stakeholders into the process of making their city more resilient.

This sense of ownership was clearly evident in the enthusiasm of the workshop participants. Mayors and local government staff from the participating cities in Ghana, Ethiopia, Uganda and Mozambique came to Brussels to share their experiences in implementing the programme.

In addition to the mayors participants included representatives from DFID, SKL International owned by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, African Centre for Cities, Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (HIS), Gaiasoft International Ltd., The Ecological Sequestration Trust (TEST), Slum Dwellers Federation, UN-Habitat, ACTogether and Cities Alliance country-based staff.

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The Future Cities Africa programme involves collecting data about a city and developing a risk assessment, which helps cities better understand the risks they face and target their interventions more effectively over the long term. It also includes the creation of a knowledge exchange platform so that participants can share their experiences and track their progress. These two components are complemented by local forums in each of the participating cities, which ensure that Future Cities Africa meets their specific needs.

During the two-day workshop participants discussed the outputs of resilience assessment tools designed to help cities better understand the concept of resilience and to practically undertake an integrated assessment of their own resilience. There were presentations by all the Future Cities Africa countries on their specific challenges, along with group discussions on future evidence gaps and research priorities to build city resilience.

Cities Alliance programmes, including Future Cities Africa, have a strong focus on gender. It was therefore crucial for participants to have the opportunity to discuss and share ideas on gender analysis and mainstreaming gender equality at every stage of programme implementation. SKL International's session on gender showed how small changes in city planning and organisation can have a big impact in achieving gender equality, often at little or no additional cost. While carrying out infrastructural changes in Swedish cities, initially to respond to gender equality, SKL International found that disadvantaged and marginalised people were also reached.

Mr Celestino António Checanhaza, Mayor of Tete Municipality in Mozambique shared his lessons learned as the workshop came to a close. "My three take-home messages are firstly, issues of municipal management need to be constantly monitored as they are often on-going. Secondly, it is important that municipalities participate in finding solutions to these issues. Thirdly, Future Cities Africa is making a major contribution in my city, Tete, as it will help build the city's resilience through city planning with a focus on sustainable development," he said.

The relevance of Future Cities Africa at the city level was reiterated by Hon. Isaac Ashai Odamtten, Metropolitan Chief Executive of Tema Metropolitan Assembly, in Ghana. "I am particularly excited to have had the opportunity to share experiences with other cities in Africa. Through Future Cities Africa, Cities Alliance is encouraging us to reflect on how we strengthen ownership at the local level and how we develop cities with inclusivity, especially gender and those most disadvantaged, in mind. This workshop has been tremendous," he said.

Participants also discussed how to mobilise investments to open up Africa for investments into cities, a key issue as fast-growing African cities struggle to meet the growing service and infrastructure needs of their residents.

The majority of participants (83 per cent) rated the workshop as very satisfactory in terms of relevance for their current work and professional interest. Additional events are planned as the Future Cities Africa programme progresses throughout the remainder of 2015 and into 2016.

For more information on Future Cities Africa please contact:
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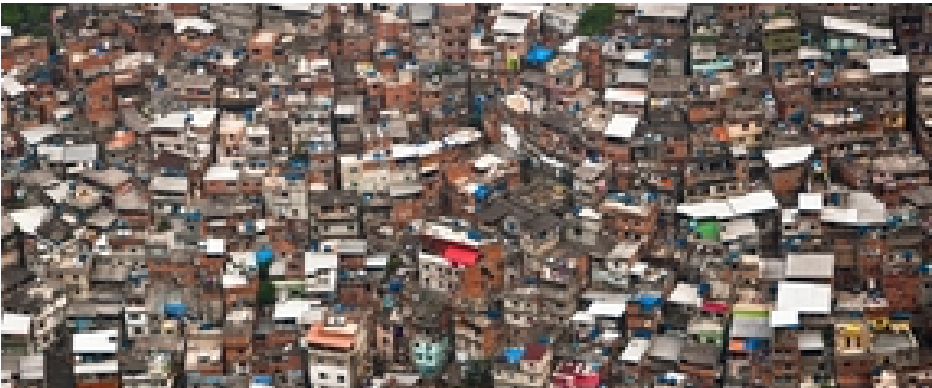
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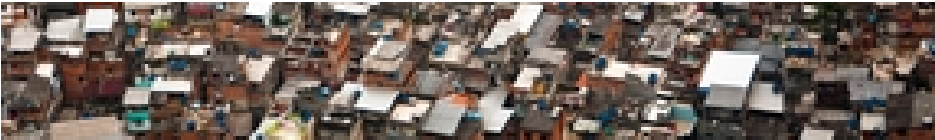
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