

A group of smiling children, mostly of African descent, are looking out from a window. They are wearing school uniforms. The window frame is visible, and the background outside is a textured orange wall.

Cities Alliance
Cities Without Slums

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 **UNOPS**

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STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

Delivering for the Urban Poor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Cities Alliance Strategic Plan 2022-2025 conveys the realignment of 20 years of experience in fighting urban poverty and sharpens our focus on tested solutions to the unprecedented challenges that are impacting cities, their informal settlements, and most acutely, the urban poor. This strategic plan centres on an ambitious vision, mission, and objective to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and seeks to foster a transformative urban recovery in communities of the urban poor.

The urgency of rising inequalities and fragility in the face of hazards and shocks

Cities worldwide are contributing to reducing poverty, but not everyone is gaining equal access to socioeconomic opportunity. Poverty and inequality in cities are still manifest spatially in informal settlements, where **one billion** people live.

Cities, especially secondary cities in middle and low-income countries, face unprecedented growth and demands, and they often fail to provide basic

services (access to clean water, sanitation, and waste management), housing, transport, and infrastructure to the people living in their ever-growing informal settlements.

Over the past 10 years, most cities have become more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, which disproportionately affects the urban poor living on unsafe land. The global Covid-19 pandemic has compounded these longstanding challenges and inequalities.

The urban poor have been massively and disproportionately impacted through income loss, lack of access to basic services, food insecurity, and increased violence against women and girls. The urban poor, and most acutely women and migrant populations, have been the hardest hit by the pandemic. The already elusive progress towards the SDGs, social cohesion, and global health are at increased risk.

The Cities Alliance focus on urban poverty, holistic urban development, and resilience

Amid these challenges, there is also opportunity. With their density and connectivity, urban areas have always created significant prospects for socio-economic development. The Cities Alliance approach is extremely well positioned to tackle those systemic challenges and rethink and transform our cities. Our broad and integrated response focuses on the medium and long term, to ensure the holistic development of cities and their informal settlements. We improve the well-being, health, and livelihoods of the urban poor by catalysing urban and social transformation processes.

Cities Alliance has a longstanding track record of supporting cities to build longer-term visions and plans for themselves

that recognise the value of all residents; attract investment to where it is needed; strengthen basic services, housing, and job opportunities for slum dwellers; help integrate the informal economy into the city supply chains; and sustain the fabric of civil society and societal cohesion in “the last mile” within informal settlements, with specific attention to gender equality and strengthening resilience to climate change.

Cities Alliance has the implementation capacity and expertise to deliver.

Since 1999, Cities Alliance has supported cities and strengthened the capacities of urban institutions in **88** countries, leveraged **US\$1.7 billion** in additional urban investment, and supported **176** cities with a combined population of **240 million** to develop inclusive and integrated City Development Strategies.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2022-2025

By 2025, as part of the global joint efforts to respond to the current crises, we seek to improve the lives and resilience of 28 million of the world’s urban poor and empower women in 24 or more cities across 10 or more countries.

Mission:

We improve the lives of urban populations by delivering innovative and integrated solutions to urban poverty in cities where it matters the most.

Vision:

We are a leading agent for urban change with a clear focus on secondary cities in rapidly urbanising economies. We provide technical expertise and grants to local and national actors to deliver programmes that directly address urban poverty and gender inequality in cities. We also leverage the collective expertise of our partnership to catalyse new urban thinking and solutions at a global level.

Business Model

Two distinct but interconnected funding windows exist: an operational Country/City Window, and a more normative Global Window.

The **Country/City Window** includes urban development projects and programmes that focus mainly on the community and/or city and/or country level. Cities Alliance provides technical assistance and pilot infrastructure in the urban sector with the intent to catalyse larger state and non-state investments.

The **Global Window** comprises projects and programmes focusing on the global and regional level. This work is designed to advance new tools, practices, and analytical understanding of emerging urban themes and to support joint communications and advocacy with our members on key policy issues for developmental coherence. It includes Joint Work Programmes that leverage the strengths of the partnership and an Innovation Fund that provides small grants to local authorities and communities to support urban transformation.

Organizational Enablers

The Strategic Plan 2022-2025 requires the Cities Alliance to optimise its efficiency and flexibility and leverage its most immediate and valuable resources: its members and the operational capacities of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). There are three key enablers:

- 1. Innovate and strengthen the membership** to pave the way for more flexible and innovative mechanisms for member engagement. This involves accelerating engagement with the private sector in all forms, joint fundraising for specific goals, and expanding Cities Alliance's ability to provide a coordinating platform and mechanism for learning.
- 2. Leverage institutional relations with UNOPS** by continuing to expand collaboration at the country and corporate levels.

- 3. Adapting to the post-Covid world** with work flexibility and digitalisation, organisational structure, and business development to make Cities Alliance as light, flexible, results-focused, and high value for money as possible with effectiveness on the ground.

Thematic Areas

Six thematic areas support our mission and the overall objective of the Strategic Plan. The themes are interconnected and reflect the integrated reality of cities and their diverse issues. They are:

-  **1. SLUM UPGRADING AND HOUSING FOR THE POOR**
-  **2. BASIC SERVICES IN CITIES**
-  **3. RESILIENCE, CITIES, AND CLIMATE CHANGE**
-  **4. ECONOMY AND INVESTMENTS**
-  **5. WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY IN CITIES**
-  **6. MIGRATION AND CITIES**

A. OPERATING CONTEXT

The past two years have changed the world. The Covid-19 pandemic has compounded longstanding underlying and unresolved factors, such as climate change, urbanisation and informality, and inequalities. The urban poor have been disproportionately impacted through income loss, lack of access to basic services, food insecurity, and increased violence against women and girls. The already elusive progress towards the SDGs is at increased risk. However, the magnitude of these challenges shall not obscure the opportunity that also lies in the recovery phase to transform the development aid model. Since 1999, Cities Alliance has enabled millions of slum dwellers in cities across the world to adapt, increasing the physical and financial resilience of communities through the provision of reliable and affordable services and the mobilisation of investments in urban infrastructure. And we will continue to do so, even more than before.

The Current Context

Urbanisation and informality.

Today, 55 per cent of the world's population lives in cities. This trend is expected to continue as more and more people move to urban areas in search of economic opportunities and a better life. By 2050, almost 70 per cent of the global population will be urban, with many of the world's developing regions evolving from predominantly rural to highly urbanised societies. Despite cities worldwide contributing to reducing poverty, not everyone has gained equal access to socio-economic opportunities. Poverty and inequality in cities are still manifest spatially in **informal settlements** where 1 billion people live, and cities, especially secondary cities, have difficulties meeting the accelerated demands for **basic services, transport, and infrastructure**.

Hazards and Shocks.

The current decade is characterised by the increased vulnerability of many countries and cities to inadequate climate change mitigation and adaptation. The impact of **climate change** is not distributed equally geographically, nor in terms of its socio-economic consequences. It has a higher impact on people who live in informal settlements in developing countries. Informal settlements are often more exposed to climatic hazards, such as urban floods or the sea-level rise, because of their location on unsafe land within cities. However, climate hazards are not the only type of hazard faced. Covid-19 is a once-in-a-century pandemic and is testing cities to their extreme, with approximately 95 per cent of Covid-19 cases taking place in urban settings. While high-income countries with effective healthcare systems have been struggling to detect, contain, and vaccinate against Covid-19, the challenge of tackling this in low- and middle-income countries and informal settlements is tremendous.

Social cohesion.

The compounding factors created by climate change, the pandemic, and the rate of urbanisation are placing massive pressure on cities in the Global South, aggravating longstanding challenges and underlying backlogs with long-term economic consequences. The widespread loss of jobs and **economic opportunities** that are already shocking predominantly informal local economies are widening the existing income and societal disparities even more. **Women**, who make up a disproportionate percentage of the workforce in the informal sector, are among the hardest hit by the current crisis, as they also in most cases bear the brunt of caregiving. The Covid-19 pandemic and climate change are also severely impacting **migrant populations**, which are already a very vulnerable group, in particular the 60 per cent of forcibly displaced people living in urban areas. Rising inequalities negatively affect the social fabric and risk causing political unrest, instability, and, ultimately, conflict, leaving those with financial, health, and social vulnerabilities in even more danger.

The changing landscape of international development.

In the last decade, cities were placed at the centre of a new, comprehensive global development agenda, which includes the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda, and the Paris Agreement. Unfortunately, this framework for action has not always been supported by adequate aid flows, particularly to urban development and informal areas. Global aid has also often translated to other forms (aid-for-trade) where national interests have been increasingly predominant. New actors and funds (including the Gulf states and China) have supplemented some of these aid channels, but they are difficult to access and comprehend for traditional development aid partners. Besides the quantity, this type of aid has steadily evolved

with less multilateralism and coordination and more earmarking and conditionalities. The overall focus on longer-term structural programmes has been substituted by shorter-term, technical project-based interventions. This means that in the years ahead – especially in a post-Covid recovery phase – the need to justify aid will only increase and depend even more on the ability to demonstrate impact and value for money in donors’ investments, as well as the need to explore innovative financing sources and models.

Turning the Greatest Challenges into Opportunity

Despite the evolving landscape of development aid, these challenges will be even more critical in the future, not only because of their global impact (on social cohesion, economies, migration, and health), but also because they will cause a step back in the progress made on the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.

These challenges also represent a critical window of opportunity in urban development to be able to transform the current inadequate approaches to a better process of recovery. At the basis of this transformation is the necessity to adopt an urban lens and understand that not only are cities the global theatre of the crisis, but also where inequalities, infrastructure gaps, climate change stresses, and demographic shifts intersect in one integrated place. Understanding this gives us the possibility to better influence the recovery and plan for the future in a better way, “building back” in a more resilient, equal, and sustainable manner.

The Cities Alliance approach is extremely well positioned to tackle systemic challenges and rethink and transform our cities. Its wide and

integrated response focuses on the medium and long term to ensure the holistic development of cities and their informal settlements.

Cities Alliance supports cities to build longer-term visions and plans for themselves that recognise the value of all their residents; attract investment to where it is needed; strengthen basic services, housing and job opportunities for slum dwellers; help integrate the informal economy into the city supply chains; and sustain the fabric of civil society and societal cohesion in “the last mile” within informal settlements, with specific attention to gender equality and strengthening resilience to climate change.

Cities Alliance has an established track record in all these areas, with the implementation capacity and expertise to deliver. Hosted by UNOPS, the Cities Alliance has world-standard delivery systems in customised grant making, local procurement, and flexible human resource systems to support

implementation as well as global access, including to countries with fragile contexts. It has a clearly defined focus that is supported by a truly global perspective coupled with a deep understanding and solid analysis of local needs. Cities Alliance has a long history of working with multiple partners, combining complementary strengths and specialisations to engage and respond most effectively to local and national needs as effectively as possible.

However, facing the scale of these challenges – especially vis-à-vis the parallel decline of multilateral aid – will also require the Cities Alliance itself to prove resilient and adaptive, changing and adjusting where needed to maintain and sustain the relevance of its agenda and delivery. This strategic plan conveys the realignment of 20 years of experience and achievement and sharpens our focus on tested solutions to the unprecedented challenges that are impacting cities and the urban poor.

Far from being the “great leveller,” Covid-19 accelerated pre-existing inequality trends and put a magnifying lens on the plight of the most vulnerable in societies who cannot afford to abide by confinement measures. (UNDP)

B.

FOCUS AND STRENGTHS

As the global partnership for urban poverty reduction, the Cities Alliance provides:

- Direct operational support to urban programmes aimed at reducing urban poverty and gender inequality. It does so in countries grappling with rapid urban growth, particularly in secondary cities where the needs are greatest and resources the least; and
- The international platform which convenes countries and diverse organisations seeking to engage, learn, and share their specialised knowledge, expertise and resources in support of a common vision and advocacy.

Primary Focus



Urban poverty has always been at the heart of the mission of the Cities Alliance, which is emphasised by the Cities Without Slums tagline. The ultimate beneficiaries of Cities Alliance activities are the urban poor and within those, the most vulnerable people.



Within this approach, the Cities Alliance pays particular attention to the needs of **secondary cities**, where the bulk of population growth is to be found, where backlogs and needs are greatest, and where resources are weakest. It is precisely within small and medium-sized cities that national economies will be built, prosperity shared, and successive generations educated and employed.

Key Strengths

Institution

Multilateral **UN-based** partnership (hosted by UNOPS)

Operating a **multi-donor fund** with direct execution capacity

Internationally recognised **platform** and **partnership** on which a broad constituency of most relevant organisations focused on urban topics convene and coalesce



Experience

Experienced, with a strong **track record** on the ground as well as on the international development stage

Capable of **operating and delivering tested solutions** in secondary, under-served cities in developing countries where poverty is pervasive, and contexts are fragile

Extended **grant-making and fund-management expertise** with the ability to channel state and non-state investments to the sub-national, local, and grassroots level of cities

Track record on laying the groundwork for **follow-up investments** and long-term engagements by development banks and national investments



Process

UNOPS enhances our reach, productivity and impact and ensures delivery to a high standard. Through UNOPS, we use some of the **internationally recognised best practices** and standards in infrastructure, procurement, project management, finance and HR.

Strong **country-level oversight** and geographic reach building on UNOPS, resulting from a local presence to coordinate programmatic activities

Flexible, with a **light governance structure** that enables us to handle earmarked funds efficiently and reliably, but with strong safeguards to ensure prudent management of funds



FACT-CHECKING

24% of the urban population – approximately 1 billion people globally – live in slums and informal settlements, often lacking reliable and affordable access to multiple public services and adequate housing. (SDG Progress Report, 2020)

75% of women in developing countries are in the informal sector, where they are less likely to have employment contracts, legal rights or social protection, and are often not paid enough to escape poverty.

By 2021, for every **100 men aged 25 to 34 living in extreme poverty** (living on US\$1.90 a day or less), there will be 118 women, a gap that is expected to increase to 121 women per 100 men by 2030.

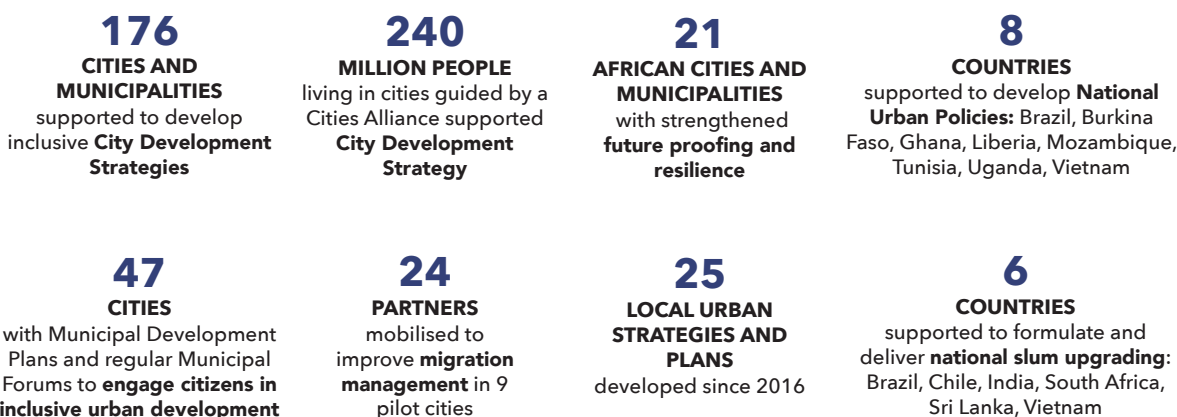
Almost **20% of the world's population lives in secondary cities**. They serve around 22% of the world's population living in metropolitan regions and 62% of those in smaller regional cities, towns and rural areas. (Cities Alliance)

Examples of Key Results

Cities Alliance has developed a longstanding track record of addressing urban poverty and improving the living conditions and resilience of the urban poor. Over 21 years, Cities Alliance has delivered 330 projects and 425 grants to advance sustainable development solutions for cities across 88 countries and leveraged US\$1.7 billion in investments in urban development globally.

Since 1999, Cities Alliance has engaged with national and city governments to improve governance, citywide service delivery, and increased resilience through the improved and inclusive management of urbanisation, including support to the development of 176 City Development Strategies:

Improving living conditions and resilience through inclusive urban planning



Improving wellbeing, health, and livelihoods of the urban poor

1.5M
PEOPLE have **improved access to basic services** through community infrastructure projects

288
WASH, public space, and gender-sensitive **community infrastructure projects** constructed

Empowering urban poor communities and the active participation of women and girls

694
COMMUNITY SAVINGS GROUPS

70%
FEMALE

30
COUNTRIES WITH STRENGTHENED SLUM DWELLER FEDERATIONS

Sustaining impact and scale

65
URBAN INSTITUTIONS REINFORCED ANNUALLY

9,000
INDIVIDUALS WITH STRENGTHENED CAPACITIES ANNUALLY

237
KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS DISSEMINATED SINCE 2014

Innovating for urban transformation

63
INNOVATIVE PROJECTS on adaptation to **climate change**, **secure tenure**, **migration**, **collaborative data initiatives** and **youth and the city**

\$8M
SEED FUNDING has led to fresh thinking, policy influence and scale

53
CITIES

42
COUNTRIES

Cities Alliance has **improved the well-being, health and livelihoods** of the urban poor through direct improvements in access to basic services (data from Community Upgrading Fund in Uganda and Liberia).

Cities Alliance works with civil society to **empower urban poor communities** and facilitate the active participation of women and girls (saving group data from Ghana, Liberia, Uganda and Vietnam).

Cities Alliance supports the **long-term institutional capacity** of its partners and has engaged national and local authorities, urban institutions and associations, civil society, universities, and SMEs in institutional strengthening.

Cities Alliance has **catalysed urban transformation processes**, incubated new thinking, and created new partnerships among urban development actors.



C. BUSINESS MODEL

In 2018, to deliver its mission and strategic objective more effectively, the Cities Alliance refined its business model – making it more holistic and easier to understand – by delivering its work programme through two distinct, but interconnected funding windows: an operational Country/City Window, and a normative Global Window.

Country/City Window

The Country/City Window comprises urban development projects and programmes whose main focus is at the community and/or city and/or country level. In these projects and programmes, the Cities Alliance provides technical assistance and pilot infrastructure in the urban sector with the intent to catalyse larger state and non-state investments.

While the overall focus is on urban poverty and slums, some interventions, as in the case of planning or policy development, could still be citywide or national in focus when deemed to provide diffuse benefits and enable other more specific activities. While Cities Alliance's ultimate goal is to have longer-term programmes tailored to the country's needs and delivered through a series of key urban initiatives in a collaborative, coherent, sustained manner, some projects and programmes can be more singular and provide immediate solutions to critical needs.

These projects and programmes are implemented in cooperation with the local and national government. They are delivered through members and partners with implementing capacity in

the country, particularly those representing the urban poor and women, or through direct execution by the Secretariat. The Secretariat has a presence on the ground to facilitate coordination, accountability, and ownership.

Global Window

The Global Window comprises projects and programmes whose main focus is at the global and regional level. This global work, which includes Joint Work Programmes as a mechanism to leverage the strengths of the partnership, is designed to advance new tools, practices, and analytical understanding of emerging urban themes and support joint communications and advocacy with our members on key policy issues to obtain developmental coherence. While being primarily normative, these projects and programmes may also feature country and city-level technical assistance pilots. The Global Window also includes an **Innovation Fund** that provides small grants to local authorities and communities to support innovative approaches to urban transformation, promoting new ideas, local partnerships and technological innovations (including digital solutions). The Innovation Fund provides for a wide geographic spread.

The two windows are highly integrated. On the one hand, the Global Window serves as a coordination and learning platform for development partners, synthesising and disseminating key lessons from Cities Alliance's operational activities to ensure that they are raised globally. On the other hand, knowledge products, advocacy, and the piloting work of the Global Window find practical application and mainstreaming opportunities through country and city operations. In both windows, the work is delivered through grants, procurement, and personnel.

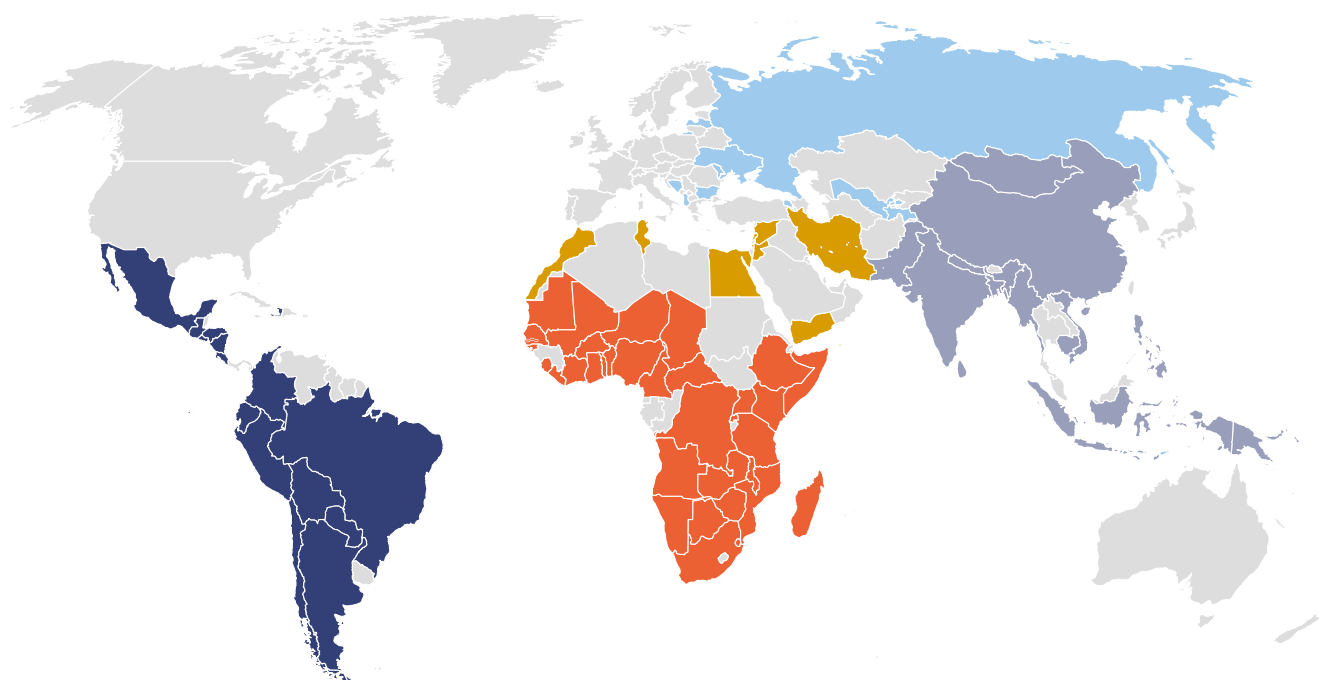
Geographic Focus

Cities Alliance support is limited to countries on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) list. The countries

or geographic areas where the Cities Alliance Secretariat will scope out initial forms of cooperation, establish field presence, and pursue partnership and resource mobilisation activities have always been informed by three drivers: (i) a clear in-country demand; (ii) potential impact (e.g., urban poverty rate, secondary city needs); and (iii) feasibility (e.g., existing country knowledge, experience, networks on the ground, partnership presence, and potential for investment).

These drivers are independent of the least developed country (LDC) and more developed country (MDC) categorisation of aid recipients, as poverty could be very deep also in the growing development economies of the MDCs. Historically, the Cities Alliance has proved successful across a wide range of contexts, including more fragile and transition countries, such as Liberia, where its programmes are both needed and effective.

Historical Cities Alliance global footprint



Asia

Nepal, Vietnam, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Indonesia, Philippines, Cambodia, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, China, East Timor, Fiji, Samoa, Papua New Guinea

Sub-Saharan Africa

Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Botswana, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Ethiopia, Namibia, Gambia, Ghana,

Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia

Latin America and the Caribbean

Haiti, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Bolivia, Jamaica, Paraguay, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Argentina

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Bulgaria, Bosnia Herzegovina, Latvia, Russia, Moldova, Albania, Tajikistan, Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan

Middle East and North Africa

Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, West Bank and Gaza

THEMATIC GUIDING LENSES



Thematic lenses anchored to City/Country and Global Programmes/Projects

COUNTRY CITY



Deliver technical assistance and infrastructure through grants to member and partners, or through direct execution, catalysing state and non-state investments, supported by a coordinating presence on the ground.

GLOBAL

Funnel evidence-based learnings from field experience



Pilot, mainstream apply knowledge and approaches to country-city projects

Diagnostic and tools on key themes and sectoral work

International coordination to facilitate coherence and new partnerships

Advocacy and dialogues on key emerging topics and opportunities to share learnings and policy understanding

City Pilots to test ideas and innovation and mainstream in the country window

Advance new tools, practices and understanding of emerging urban issues and support joint advocacy with our members

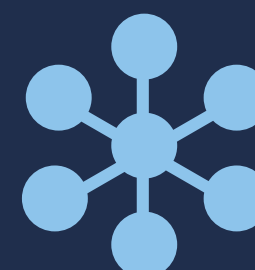
The 2022-25 business strategy will seek to:

SUPPORT 28M URBAN POOR



OPERATE IN 10 COUNTRIES AND

24 CITIES



FOCUS ON 6 THEMATIC WORK PROGRAMMES

PROVIDE \$35M TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



NOTES:

35M is programme delivery not including other costs. This has been calculated on ~10% annual budget increase.

Number of cities is validated on the average cost for intervention in a city for two years.

28M includes direct (3M) and indirect (25M) beneficiaries of programmes based on past data and averages.

D. THEMATIC AREAS FOR 2022-2025

A comprehensive and integrated approach to urban development has always been the hallmark of Cities Alliance operations. We have identified six thematic areas to guide our work in the next four years that reflect the integrated reality of cities and the diversity of issues that are characterising them. These themes are both addressed by the Global Window, and the technical assistance delivered at the country and city level.

In support of its mission and the overall objective of the Strategic Plan, the work of the Cities Alliance is guided by six thematic focus areas. These focus areas provide important lenses to help organise, analyse, design and strategically programme Cities Alliance's work across the two windows. The thematic focus areas are strongly interconnected in many ways. In slum upgrading interventions, incremental housing must be complemented by the provision of basic services which, in turn, are key to strengthen resilience against the risks posed by climate change. Induced climate shocks or economic crises are key push factors of migration, with migrants being particularly a vulnerable group in poor urban areas. Where the economy is unregulated, women carry the greatest burden, often with little recognition or reward. However, these interventions are not implementable at scale without significant investments and the ability to involve the private sector.

While in principle these six themes may correspond individually to certain programmes, in reality, because of their interlinkages and the organisation's integrated approach, many Cities Alliance operations will proactively target a combination of these themes (although to different degrees depending on context, needs and demand). As there is not necessarily a one-to-one correspondence between the themes and the way programmes are structured, our work on a thematic area can find funding from different sources and be articulated into more normative work at the global level or operational work in a city or slum community.



FOCUS AREA 1

Slum Upgrading and Housing for the Poor



The Challenge

One billion people globally (24 per cent) live in slums and informal settlements. The pandemic wrought food insecurity, threat of eviction, and loss of livelihoods and income on the urban poor, who were unable to adhere to physical distancing or basic hygiene measures. The UN also assessed that overcrowding likely increased the risk of gender-based violence faced by women in informal

settlements. “The global urban housing crisis has worsened the pandemic and been worsened by it.”¹ There is an urgent need for incremental and innovative responses to inadequate housing and overcrowding. Upgrading can have other virtuous effects, such as improving livelihood potential for home enterprises, increasing urban resilience, and supporting physical and mental health and well-being so that when shocks occur, the impact is lessened.

Our Objective

Cities Alliance will support national and local governments and communities in their efforts to improve the housing conditions in informal settlements. Where supported by well-structured public policies and investment, secure tenure, and alignment to planning, informal settlers can use flexible, responsive, and affordable housing processes that enable households to extend and improve their dwellings over time.

¹ https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_covid_urban_world_july_2020.pdf

Our Response

DATA AND PROFILING OF SLUMS.

Informal settlements are predominantly excluded from the city's planning and basic services, mostly due to the lack of political recognition of the urban poor as full citizens. Knowledge on informal settlements helps to define the collective identity of poor urban communities and, ultimately, provide a basis for a dialogue and engagement between communities and local governments on their planning needs and priorities. Working with its members, Cities Alliance will continue to support and scale the profiling and enumeration of settlements to provide slum dwellers and city planners with a detailed overview of each settlement, including the housing stock and quality, land tenure status, and hazard and risk mapping. We will then work with communities and cities to use this information to develop participatory slum upgrading strategies for informal settlements, which will be implemented through the Community Upgrading Fund (CUF).

LAND TENURE.

Security of land tenure is one of the most critical challenges for sustainable urban development and slum upgrading. When tenure is uncertain, slum interventions become politically complex and insurmountable, both for the communities and the local governments, and poor households have less incentive to invest in incremental housing and neighbourhood development through saving and borrowing. Cities Alliance will continue to support secondary cities with the integration of formal, informal, and customary land rights and provide opportunities for local authorities and slum communities to initiate dialogues for inclusive planning, access to basic services and infrastructure, and ultimately to improve land access and records. We will pilot and scale land administration and information management systems as well as innovative technologies to map and enumerate communities.

INCREMENTAL HOUSING FOR THE POOR AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES.

The largest and most consistent producers of housing stock are neither the formal private nor public sectors, but rather the urban poor themselves. Through this process, housing is produced informally and incrementally, as and when households can afford to invest. Incremental housing is in fact the most financially viable and scalable public policy option to governments.

Instead of pursuing more expensive and ineffective social housing programmes, governments should purposefully create an enabling environment to directly support, encourage, and expand the efforts of the urban poor. With its members, the Cities Alliance will continue to support secondary cities and communities to implement housing policies and direct interventions on incremental housing, including the related land acquisition and tenure, community management, and sites-and-services planning, consistently with international safeguard standards. In partnership, Cities Alliance will support the larger development of the housing sector to allow physical interventions to be sustainable. With its members, Cities Alliance will work on the financial framework that enables investments in slum upgrading and housing for the poor by supporting the development of local markets and expanding access to innovative housing financial products and credit for the unserved informal market. Through housing support centres, the Cities Alliance will also provide cities and communities with access to technical advisory services on sustainable housing construction and upgrading, provide training, create value chains with the local SMEs, and support the negotiation and provision of affordable, resilient, and quality building materials. A key future focus area for Cities Alliance thus will be the intersection between slum upgrading at scale and climate mitigation and opportunities to expand the use of sustainable construction and materials.

MONITOR, REPORT ON, AND ADVOCATE AGAINST FORCED EVICTIONS.

Cities Alliance reaffirms its strong opposition to forced evictions, which the United Nations has classified as “...a gross violation of human rights, in particular the right to adequate housing” (Commission on Human Rights, Resolution 1993/77). Cities Alliance has monitored, reported on, and advocated against forced evictions since its inception in 1999. Forced slum clearances are devastating to the most vulnerable people. Once evicted, communities lose vital social cohesion and support as well as livelihoods. The Covid-19 pandemic has increased the urgency of protecting urban poor communities from the threat of eviction from their homes, settlements, and their places of work. Cities Alliance will continue to advocate against forced evictions and support communities to organise and be empowered to establish their rights, as well as provide local governments with proven, pragmatic alternatives.

FOCUS AREA 2

Basic Services in Cities



The Challenge

Resilient and sustainable urban communities rely on safe, reliable, and affordable basic services, such as water, sanitation, waste management, and energy in cities. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic has made clear that health is more than just the provision of healthcare; it is backed by a myriad of basic services that allow for health to be maintained and healthcare provided. Conversely, their chronic or sudden disruption, which characterise many informal settlements, heightens the safety, health, and livelihood risks faced by the

urban poor. In Sub-Saharan Africa, only 50 per cent of urban residents have access to safely managed drinking water, and 20 per cent had access to safely managed sanitation in 2017.² Women and girls disproportionately bear the burden of inadequate water and sanitation. Municipal waste collection, disposal and management are lagging in cities, leading to detrimental environmental and health impacts. Between 2010 and 2018, only 52.2 per cent of the municipal solid waste was collected in Sub-Saharan Africa.³ Whilst the needs have never been more evident, there is no global concerted action on basic services for the poor.

Our Objective

Cities Alliance will support national and local governments, associations of local authorities, and urban communities in their efforts to advocate and address the critical risks (such as climate and health) faced by the urban poor and exposed acutely during the pandemic that result from inadequate infrastructure and exclusion from access to basic services. Cities Alliance will continue to leverage the community infrastructure model and quick response mechanisms to provide immediate solutions and strengthen planning, local capacities, and civil society partnerships for a longer-term transformative recovery.

² https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/jmp-2019-full-report.pdf, pp. 47 & 60.

³ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/goal-11/>

Our Response

COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTIONS IN THE LAST MILE OF CITIES: WASH, WASTE MANAGEMENT, AND ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE.

Informal settlements are disconnected from mainstream services and therefore characterised by a lack of adequate, reliable, and affordable access to public services. The urban poor are severely at risk, which the Covid-19 pandemic made acutely clear. The Cities Alliance will continue to build basic service infrastructure in the last mile to communities through its tested Community Upgrading Fund (CUF) model. A community-local government partnership initiative, the CUF provides financing and technical support for the development of small infrastructure projects selected as immediate priorities by the communities themselves. Through this mechanism, projects such as building toilet facilities, establishing water points, renovating a school, or projects to support adaptation to climate change provide not only immediate solutions, but also strengthen planning, local capacities, and local partnerships for a longer-term recovery. In response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the urban poor, Cities Alliance

will also emphasise the need for a preventative primary health lens in its programmes, principally through the provision of water, basic hygiene and environmental services.

INCLUSIVE URBAN PLANNING.

The nature of modern urbanisation, compounded by mega-trends such as climate change, the pandemic, migration, and economic turmoil, have reemphasised inclusive city planning as a key instrument for recovery. Cities Alliance will build on over 20 years of expertise in providing planning support to local governments. It will continue promoting strategic urban planning in the form of multi-sectoral and citywide city development strategies that allow secondary cities to identify a long-term urban developmental path in the three areas of sustainability (economic, social, and ecological), as well as plans for investments in public services and infrastructure, governance systems, and physical implementation. Cities Alliance will continue to implement the tested and effective Urban Expansion Planning methodologies that can enable cities to better respond to rapid city growth by making land and basic services access available for future planned settlement.




DIAGNOSTICS AND POLICIES FOR MANAGEMENT AND DELIVERY OF BASIC SERVICES.

The lack of provision of sufficient, affordable, and quality municipal services to growing populations in rapidly urbanising cities was laid bare by the Covid-19 pandemic and continues to be a critical challenge with the expected rate of urbanisation. The deficient delivery of public services, especially in under-capacitated secondary cities, is due to a combination of factors that go beyond the lack of infrastructure and cover broader governance issues such as jurisdictional matters, lack of clear delineation of responsibilities between local and national, the affordability of service, and policy frameworks for engaging with the private sector. Cities Alliance will assist cities to improve public services, focusing on the technical diagnostic and costing structure/affordability; the capacity development of local authorities in the management and delivery of services, strategy and policy development; and regulatory frameworks to attract private sector investments.

COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING AND CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT.

Empowered, informed residents and the participation of the urban poor in urban development are essential components of sustainable urban management. The organisation of settlements of the urban poor as a critical mass to advocate and articulate the needs for improved basic services is critical to making local governments more effective and inclusive. Urban civil society organisations played an effective role in mobilising and responding to Covid-19 by distributing emergency relief, improving access to handwashing facilities, and advocating for improved service delivery. Cities Alliance works directly with civil society to help the urban poor build their capacity to engage with the local government to develop lasting solutions. Through the membership, Cities Alliance will continue to support saving groups and facilitate the mobilisation of household investments into improved housing and public infrastructure. It will support the creation of spaces for dialogue in the form of settlement, municipal, and city forums and capacitate those forums to negotiate with local authorities and be part of inclusive urban planning processes. Cities Alliance will also provide critical support to strengthen community organisations and federations of the urban poor, building their technical and financial capacity, and encourage coalitions and cooperation.



FOCUS AREA 3 Resilience, Cities and Climate Change

The Challenge

Globally, billions of people live in cities that face increased threats from hazards induced by changes in climate. The one billion people who live in informal settlements around the world bear the brunt of the negative impacts of climate change, given their exposure and physical, social, or economic vulnerability. Informal settlements are often sites of high exposure, mostly unsuitable for habitation, and thus require significant support

to lower vulnerability in the face of increasing climate hazards. At the same time, communities in informal settlements are often forced to resort to unsustainable coping strategies to access services, such as cutting wood for fuel, environmentally damaging waste disposal, or encroaching on environmentally sensitive land, such as wetlands. We now know that avoiding catastrophic climate change requires that urban and climate change programming become one and the same thing.

“There’s so much overcrowding in slums. Most of us live in one-roomed houses. There’s a lack of water and sanitation. How are we supposed to wash hands and prevent the spread? We have to go to the wetland to secure water and it’s so overcrowded with people waiting in line. How are we supposed to social distance?”

– Sheila Magara, community leader with the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federation and member of SDI’s Management Committee

Our Objective

Cities Alliance will support activities that reduce the vulnerability of cities and communities by preserving and rehabilitating urban ecosystems, supporting resilience planning, and developing local capacities to understand risks and plan, finance, and implement actions. The Cities Alliance will advocate for integrated approaches to climate mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk management and will promote the urban poor as custodians of the urban environment and agents of resilience.

Our Response

RESILIENT URBAN COMMUNITIES THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED ADAPTATION.

Slum dwellers are both most affected by climate change and most in need of a voice. Cities Alliance will provide a platform for slum dwellers to shape their development through participatory approaches that foster local innovation and link climate resilience to local livelihoods. Cities Alliance supports communities, in partnership with local governments and their networks, to build resilient cities that reduce both risk and vulnerability by strengthening urban ecosystems, promoting investment in local resilience efforts, and advocating for people-centred resilience. Empowerment of the most vulnerable is at the centre of our agenda, in particular creating agency for women, children and minority groups. Community-based adaptation projects will seek climate-neutral resilience solutions, incorporating access to renewable energy (solar mini-grid or off grid), access to clean water, waste-to-energy, composting, water recycling, sustainable drainage systems, and digital solutions to surveillance and disaster risk reduction.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROFILING AND ASSESSMENT OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

Involving the urban poor in climate-resilient planning is key to ensure sustainability strategies are implemented and reach all levels of a city. Urban resilience assessments are environmental profiling tools that include hazard risk mapping at

community and city scales. Environmental profiling supports cities to identify differentiated needs for resilience planning and urban poor communities, and through support from Cities Alliance, build the capacity of secondary cities for climate-resilience planning. Cities Alliance will incorporate environmental profiling to improve the resilience evidence base, inform project planning for gender-inclusive operational plans, and influence policy and replication. We will ensure that assessment of informal settlements incorporates and links local knowledge from neighbourhoods and individuals with broader environmental city assessments. We will also provide city planners with a clear method of collecting data that will enable them to assess how resilient cities are to the impacts of climate change.

RESTORED ECOSYSTEMS AND NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS.

Cities Alliance has a track record of supporting the upgrading of informal settlements in combination with the rehabilitation of urban green ecology, with leadership by the residents. We will focus on supporting communities of the urban poor to restore ecosystems and resilient livelihoods in cities through nature-based solutions and ecosystem restoration. Cities Alliance will also support secondary cities to harness an ecosystem's natural power to regulate hazards (e.g., coastal mangrove forests to curb flooding) and to supply sustainable and circular resources (e.g., water and renewable energy solutions), whilst limiting the overexploitation of natural resources. In this approach, the upgrading of informal settlements is combined with the rehabilitation of urban green ecology.

LOWER CARBON EMISSIONS IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS.

Energy solutions for informal settlements that limit the overexploitation of resources like fuelwood and the burning of solid waste are urgently needed. In tandem with slum upgrading and basic service interventions, Cities Alliance, with its members, will support cities and settlements to implement lower carbon-building materials, cleaner energy, solid waste management, and circular economy solutions and promote well-designed urban density to advance the renewable agenda in informal settlements, and to contribute to the "race to zero." Cities Alliance will support communities and cities to provide decentralised renewable energy that delivers safer, reliable access, lower household costs and reduced emissions.



FOCUS AREA 4 Economy and Investments

The Challenge

The establishment of the Cities Alliance was premised on its capacity to leverage follow-up investments to translate its upstream work into larger-scale urban infrastructure and interventions, particularly from the multilateral development banks. While such a purpose remains a critical challenge in order to provide scale and impact to our work, it is clear today that the Cities Alliance approach needs to be rethought, specifically in relation to the private sector. The implementation of the SDGs requires a level of investment

which significantly exceeds the capacity of what development aid institutions can provide. Filling this gap will rely on more sophisticated financial instruments that blend public funding with private sector investments and increasing partnerships with private sector entities. This focus on larger investment mobilisation should be integrated into the work on local economic development and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). In most development contexts, local economic development is entrenched with the informal economy, and informal value chains are to be reinforced and integrated into the broader city.

Our Objective

Cities Alliance will assist cities to translate urban technical assistance programmes into longer-term infrastructure and public service improvements. The Cities Alliance will build the capacity of local governments and establish methods for their engagement with financial institutions and funds, as well as the local private sector. Cities Alliance will also support local informal entrepreneurs, producers, and traders who are responsible for a significant part of the local economy, jobs, and livelihoods of the urban poor and identify mechanisms for their protection and integration into larger value chains.

"Resources for adaptation and resilience-building are critical for the vast majority of developing countries. This can no longer – especially in light of recent climate disasters – be the forgotten component of climate action. Specifically, we need to see 50 per cent of the total share of climate finance to be allocated to adaptation and resilience."

– Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat

Our Response

CAPACITY AND PLANNING FOR LOCAL INVESTMENTS.

As part of its mandate, Cities Alliance has facilitated the development of urban strategies and plans for secondary cities across the globe. In some cases, this work has extended to supporting the development of investment plans for local governments and informed the broader strategy through the identification of priority urban development projects. The development of these investment plans follows tested methodologies and is complemented by capacity development of local authorities. Through this technical assistance work, concrete urban development projects can be identified and prioritised, and their technical feasibility and financial viability evaluated. Once projects are clearly prioritised and “packaged,” they will either - if of relatively small scale - be implemented by a municipality with Cities Alliance assistance, while larger scale projects will be aligned to larger public and private investments.

SAFEGUARDS ON INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS.

With a growing recognition that efficient and productive cities are fundamental to economic growth, governments have begun to invest in the large urban infrastructure projects needed to turn around the diseconomies and congestion that characterise many developing cities. However, infrastructure projects and their links to land often trigger a set of complex environmental, social, and livelihood risks that must be mitigated. Safeguard policies have been developed to ensure that no-one is worse off; while good on paper, however, they often remain a weak instrument due to very limited national implementation capacity. The Cities Alliance, through its membership, is ideally suited to support the institutional capacity strengthening to implement safeguard programmes. It can assemble the complex set of skills and dedicated capacities that are required to effectively mitigate the negative impacts of relocation, preserve livelihoods, and protect natural eco-systems. These include support to communities to re-establish and strengthen livelihoods and to rebuild their homes to a higher standard than before.

INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH PRIVATE SECTOR AND MULTILATERAL DEVELOPMENT BANKS FOR FUND MOBILISATION.

One of the major challenges for municipalities has been the identification of funding sources for their urban development projects when their operating budget is not sufficient. Cities Alliance has expertise in assisting cities in identifying alternative funding sources by working closely with Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs). As a technical assistance organisation in the urban sector, Cities Alliance’s work has always complemented the hard pipeline of the MDBs and has often been utilised in the preparation of follow-up operations. With the existing financing gap, the Cities Alliance has more recently explored other viable options for municipalities which entail accessing more complex forms of financial instruments, ranging from impact investment to blended financing. In this sphere, specific attention will be devoted to creating conditions for engaging the private sector, establishing spaces for dialogue, and facilitating specific matching investment vehicles. Cities Alliance will also seek solutions to unlocking climate finance and funds, which can support the management of resilient urban growth but are currently very difficult for secondary cities to access.

INFORMAL ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT.

While making cities able to attract investment is a needed ingredient for economic growth, in developing countries, fostering local development is equally important. This requires incorporating the role of the informal economy, which is a predominant share, as informal producers and traders contribute to both job creation and the national gross domestic product (GDP). However, in the minds of too many politicians and officials, informality is more likely to be associated with illegality than with entrepreneurship, human resilience, and innovation. As a result, informality frequently becomes vulnerable employment and, due to low and insecure incomes and livelihoods, informal employment also often overlaps with lack of legal protection, slum residency, and poverty. Demographically, women and youth in secondary cities are the most impacted by this dynamic; in Sub-Saharan Africa, 84 per cent of youth are occupied in livelihoods without regular or regulated payment.

Cities Alliance will continue to innovate solutions that embrace the hybrid economy and offer tested, pragmatic routes to transformational change that benefit both the city and the working poor. Our experience consistently demonstrates that cities that integrate informal activities into value chains are far more likely to be successful than those which demonise, harass, and punish informal

workers and traders. With its members, Cities Alliance will continue to deliver operations that include local economy assessments, vocational training, SME strengthening, and other initiatives that seek to increase economic opportunities and the socio-economic integration of both women and youth.





FOCUS AREA 5

Women and Gender Equality in Cities

The Challenge

Almost everything in our cities has been designed and shaped by men, often reflecting the needs and aspirations of the wealthy and powerful. Gender inequalities are built into our cities, from public spaces to service provision, transportation, land management, and housing. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation,

increasing the gender gap by a generation, from 99.5 years to 135.6 years.⁴ Pro-poor interventions will only be effective if they are planned, implemented, and evaluated based on their gender implications. Investment in infrastructure that is truly inclusive – that takes all needs into account – cannot only improve and protect the lives and livelihoods of women and girls but help dismantle inequalities at large.

Our Objective

Cities Alliance will support national and local governments, communities, and women by driving urban initiatives that reduce gender inequalities and empower all women, specifically the most marginalised. Where cities are better planned for women, they are, by extension, better for everyone.

Our Response

GENDER INCLUSIVE URBAN GOVERNANCE AND MUNICIPAL BUDGETING.

A gender-sensitive approach to urban governance aims to increase women's participation in the development of human settlements and incorporate gender inclusion into urban planning and policies. Cities Alliance will focus on developing a gender-sensitive framework for the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of urban policies at the national level, participatory assessment of gender gaps at municipal level, and the development of municipal gender equality action plans. An important part of the work with municipalities involves using gender budgeting as a strategy to achieve equality between women and men by focusing on how public municipal resources are collected and spent. Cities Alliance will focus on gender-sensitive municipal budget analysis and gender analyses of sectorial programmes, including providing support to city stakeholders on the collection and use of gender statistics, as well as gender-responsive participation in the budgeting process.

INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACE AND URBAN RENEWAL.

Studies across cultures show that the gendered use of public space is a global phenomenon. Women tend to feel uneasy resting in public spaces, not just from fear of sexual attacks but also because of the notion that women's movements in public areas should only be purposeful and not for recreation. Cities Alliance will focus on gender-sensitive assessment and evaluation of women's safety in public spaces, including the facilitation of living laboratories to co-design public space interventions. We will support the rehabilitation of public spaces and buildings through spatial interventions and programming focused on the needs of women and girls, and we will facilitate the co-design of women-led Urban Regeneration Strategies, which include women's access to municipal services.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING IN CITIES.

In communities and through active citizenship at the grassroots level. This was evidenced during the Covid-19 emergency. At a formal level, however, women are under-represented in political office due to a lack of income, education, and freedom, as well as gender divisions of labour. Only 13 per cent of mayors in the world are women. Male-dominated leadership often lacks the political will, understanding, and know-how to address gender inequality, making it a vicious circle that is difficult to break. Cities Alliance with its members will focus on applying participatory diagnostic tools to assess political, spatial, civic, and digital enablers of or barriers to women and girls' leadership. We will support digital literacy and leadership mentoring programmes for women and girls from urban poor communities and provide technical support to local authorities on participatory processes, e-governance, and dialogue facilitation to include women and girls.

WOMEN-LED CLIMATE ADAPTATION IN CITIES.

Climate change affects women and men differently. Women and girls bear the brunt of environmental, economic, and social shocks, and they currently make up 80 per cent of climate refugees. Women are often the first responders when disaster strikes and important decision makers at home when it comes to energy and waste. However, many national climate action and disaster preparedness plans do not account for the gendered components of climate risk. Cities Alliance will support data collection on the gender-related impacts of climate change on selected communities or neighbourhoods. We will facilitate the development of gender-sensitive climate adaptation planning and/or city resilience strategies at the city level. We will also support the construction of small-scale green infrastructure designed to address women's needs, including off-grid solar-voltaic, water kiosks, and green spaces.

⁴ The World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2021, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021>.



FOCUS AREA 6

Migration and Cities

The Challenge

The number of recorded international migrants is approaching 300 million, and the number of undocumented and internal migrants is likely a multiple of official statistics. For most migrants and displaced persons, cities are a primary destination to seek shelter, well-being, and opportunities.

Typically, those cities experiencing the greatest impact from migration are overwhelmed and unprepared to absorb the growing number of migrants. With increasing migration to urban areas, a new approach is needed that puts cities at the centre and supports them in transforming this challenge into opportunities for development.

Our Objective

Cities Alliance will support national and local governments and communities to respond to, manage, and capitalise on the opportunities and contributions arising from migration. With the changing dynamics of migration, it is key to empower cities to improve local migration management and to include migrants and displaced persons.

Our Response

MIGRANTS AND DISPLACED PERSONS ARE INCLUDED IN URBAN PLANNING AND BUDGETING.

Rural-urban migration is leading to population increase in rapidly urbanising secondary cities in low-income countries, exacerbating massive and unplanned urban expansion. Cities Alliance will continue to support secondary cities to apply proactive and climate-sensitive approaches, such as urban expansion planning. The availability of data is a precondition for such forecasting and planning exercises. With limited central resources and municipal revenues, local authorities struggle to provide basic services to all residents. Cities Alliance will apply remote sensing and sampling techniques and collect primary and need-based data, particularly on refugees and displaced persons, to fill the data gap.

As gender norms are highly contextualised, Cities Alliance will continue to engage local organisations with a gender equality mandate to identify improved migration and displacement strategies.

ECONOMIC INCLUSION, REMITTANCES AND DIASPORA FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT.

The first stop for rural-urban migrants, particularly the rural poor, are secondary cities because of their greater proximity. Forced migrants and displaced persons, particularly youth, are equally seeking shelter and livelihood opportunities in nearby cities. International remittances are a lifeline for many poor urban households and active diaspora engagement for local development holds unexplored potential. Cities Alliance will continue to support local and national dialogues to advocate for greater investments in secondary



cities and the design of locally relevant actions to boost jobs and match workers to opportunities. We will support cities, in a conflict-sensitive manner, in creating enabling frameworks to attract remittances and the broader involvement of the diasporas for local development.

SOCIAL COHESION AMONG MIGRANTS, DISPLACED PERSONS, AND HOST COMMUNITIES.

Most cities merely cope with the consequences of rapid urbanisation instead of proactively leveraging population growth for poverty reduction and greater equality. Consequently, a negative narrative on migration and displacement persists that views newcomers as responsible for overcrowding, congestion, increasing exposure to hazards, and shortfalls in basic infrastructure, services, and livelihoods. Cities Alliance will continue to support local city stakeholders to build and showcase a narrative of inclusion and social cohesion and facilitate dialogue and cooperation between local and national authorities. Interventions will introduce participatory governance approaches and ensure the representation of migrants and displaced persons in municipal planning. Beyond participation, Cities Alliance will facilitate community-driven development mechanisms/ modalities with tangible benefits for both residents and newcomers and contribute to a sense of connectedness and belonging.

CITIES AND REGIONS COOPERATE TO MANAGE FLUID MIGRATION CORRIDORS, SEEK JOINT SOLUTIONS, AND ADVOCATE.

A perspective of regional cooperation and systems of cities helps erode administrative boundaries along migration corridors, focusing instead on connections with neighbouring cities, villages, and communities further afield to better understand and leverage mobility patterns for local and national development. Cities Alliance will focus on migration corridors to leverage cooperation among cities. Together with members, Cities Alliance will continue to interrelate the local, national, regional, and global levels, grounding global agendas in local realities, and work towards giving a stronger voice to local actors who do not feel sufficiently included or consulted on migration debates and agendas, such as the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, the New Urban Agenda, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, and the Global Compact on Refugees, including the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). We will further expand our peer-to-peer learning approach and network for urban practitioners.

“We need to accept the fact that cities will get bigger. Many officials don’t want their cities to grow, and they think that by passing a law they won’t. This is unrealistic, it’s just a guarantee of informal settlements and it’s also inhumane. What policy should be about is to make room for those people who want to move to the city and benefit from the opportunities that cities can offer.”

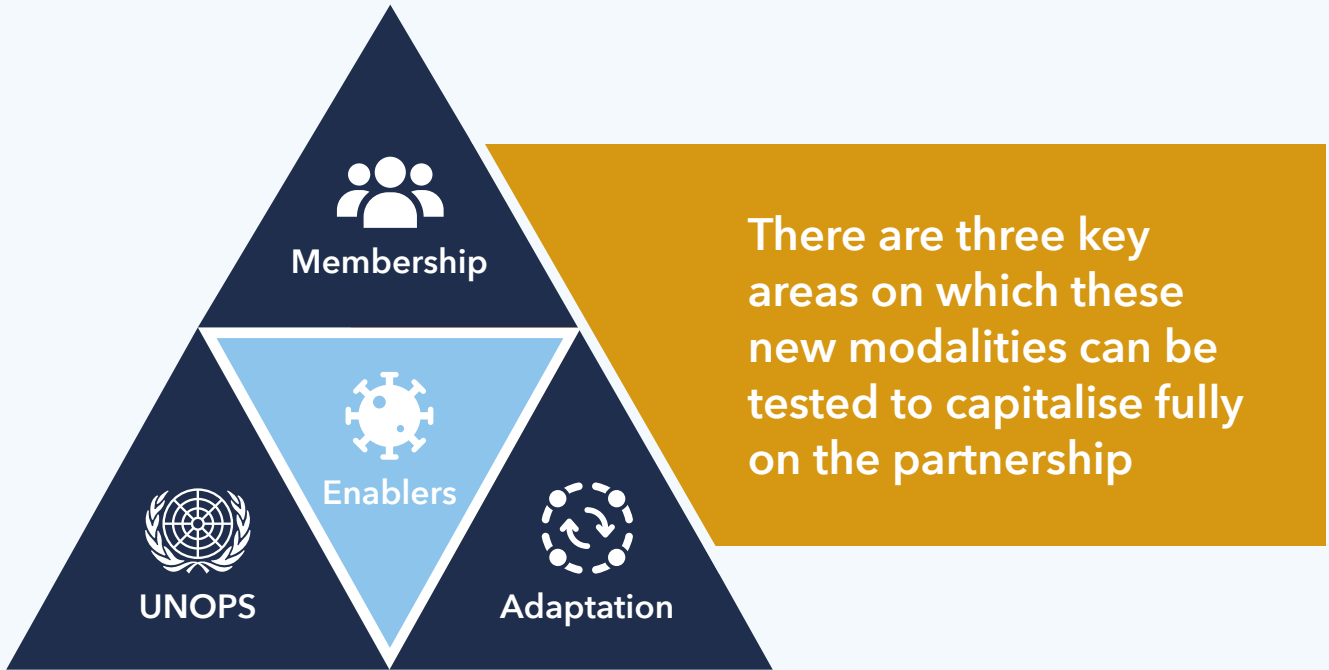
– Paul Romer, Nobel laureate and former World Bank chief economist

E.

ORGANISATIONAL ENABLERS

2022-2025

The external operating space has been increasingly challenging, with the decline of multilateral aid and the increase in conditionalities on the use of funds. To successfully deliver our mission, the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 requires the Cities Alliance to be able to prove itself resilient and adaptive, changing and adjusting courageously where needed. This means not only optimising the efficiency and flexibility of the organisation, but also leveraging, in the best way possible, its own most immediate and valuable resources - the members - and make better use of the operational capacities of UNOPS. The magnitude of the challenges cannot be tackled alone.



Corporate Enabler 1:



Innovate and Strengthen the Membership

The membership is the backbone of the Cities Alliance. Members engage in the strategic direction of Cities Alliance through its governance systems, the governance of the Fund and, at times, the implementation of programmatic activities. The membership provides the organisation's global reach, expertise, reputation in different sectoral areas.

This partnership structure has many advantages. Cities Alliance has been uniquely positioned to combine the complementary strengths of its members to achieve its mission. However, the strategic context within which the Cities Alliance is operating has changed dramatically in recent years, affecting the ways in which the partnership works.

The most notable among these changes is the global decline of core funding in development aid, which has, in turn, limited the Secretariat's flexibility to design and initiate activities and provide financial support to some of its members. This has been exacerbated by the parallel growth of earmarking, which limits staff time to dedicate to the partnership and triggers further restrictions on the development of consortia and the use of funds.

Aware of these unalterable circumstances, members have clearly articulated a desire for a far more creative and bold approach to the partnership mechanism within the Cities Alliance. The adoption of this Strategic Plan should therefore pave the way for more flexible and innovative mechanisms for member engagement, rather than relying on transactional and financial incentives.

Governance.

Cities Alliance has undergone significant change in recent years with a framework created for a new set of governance arrangements and new

constituencies of membership. However, despite this repositioning, more work is needed to protect and foster the diversity of its membership. In this optic, it is important to accelerate engagement with the private sector in all its forms, including potentially individual philanthropists. By engaging private sector players in its governance, the whole Cities Alliance partnership can benefit from their financial, technical, and commercial expertise and support, opening the possibility of more innovative and impactful projects and programmes to improve the lives of the urban poor.

Programme development with members that have implementation capacity.

In the current funding environment, Cities Alliance should be regarded as a collective resource. Members with implementation capacity shall fundraise jointly for specific goals, using the Cities Alliance as a vehicle. In fact, the Cities Alliance has a strong reputation, consolidated expertise, and track record both in implementation and fund management. Furthermore, as part of the multilateral system, the Cities Alliance has access to specific budgets that many implementing members may not. Against this background, the Cities Alliance will also explore modalities to allow for longer-term and structured cooperation with implementing members to leverage the value of the partnership.

Co-Creation.

Coherence of effort is an original mandate of the Cities Alliance. While this coherence has been particularly effective when implemented in Country Programmes, this is an area of enormous potential at the global and normative level. This is where the Cities Alliance can and should go much further in developing its ability to provide a coordinating platform and mechanism for learning from and consolidating members' own work, building support networks, instilling mutual accountability, and mobilising members to drive clearly identified and critical policy outcomes at all levels.



© John Ree - UNOPS



Corporate Enabler 2: Leverage Institutional Relations with UNOPS

The relationship between Cities Alliance and UNOPS has been consolidated over the years and is solid and beneficial. Two factors made this possible. First, UNOPS has increasingly accrued experience in managing the portfolio of hosted entities and set up tailored policies and procedures to regulate the relationship. UNOPS has also welcomed several other partnerships onto its platform, enabling a better understanding of hosted entities with distinct mandates, governance arrangements, funding mechanisms, and operating models.

Second, the Secretariat is now recognised as a part of UNOPS, making the policy environment clearer. Many of the fiduciary control functions performed centrally by UNOPS have been transferred to the Secretariat, premised on an increased number of trained personnel and expertise in fiduciary functions. Furthermore, as the hosting relationship matures, the values, culture, policies, and practices of the hosting entity are also more naturally diffused in the Secretariat.

The previous Strategic Plan called for a stronger relationship with UNOPS, shifting from purely transactional to also strategic and operational. This Strategic Plan will advance this direction and explore new, more ample and systemic forms of collaboration.

Country level.

The objective here is to reinforce the Cities Alliance's country presence and identify complementary and follow-up projects to the Country Window operations. The vast presence of UNOPS on the ground allows Cities Alliance to quickly establish itself in a country by locating its experts in a UNOPS country office and rely on efficient local support services (including procurement) and expertise with notable cost savings for the setup. This integration and cooperation could also be explored in implementation, where UNOPS expertise would be used to deliver a specific component of a programme, or in virtue of the complementarity of the mandates, UNOPS could play a role in the harder infrastructure services while Cities Alliance focuses on the upstream technical assistance.

Corporate level.

More potential also exists for the Cities Alliance within UNOPS headquarters, especially in terms of facilitating business development opportunities with donor countries with which UNOPS has a solid relationship. UNOPS also has strong in-house expertise in engaging the private and philanthropy sectors that can benefit Cities Alliance. Finally, Cities Alliance aims to build stronger relations with other hosted entities, exploring potential avenues of mutual interest and collaboration to achieve stronger development results and impact on the ground.

Corporate Enabler 3:

Adapting the Organisation to the Post-Covid world



The Covid-19 pandemic is the greatest public health disaster in generations. It will have long-lasting effects on all aspects of society, including the ways in which development aid is set up and conducted.

The Cities Alliance can expect at least three key interconnected challenges to emerge from the pandemic and its consequences. First, we must expect potential impacts on aid funding as a result of economic recession and the predicted pressure on traditional donors to respond to domestic political demand to cut international assistance and invest domestically. Pressure to demonstrate the impact of development spending will be even greater. Second, the increased restrictions on air travel resulting from affordability factors, health requirements, and growing pressure to align with the climate change imperative indicate that there will not be a widespread return to the pre-crisis level of international travel in the short term. Third, the crisis has accelerated the normalisation of remote working favoured by the increasingly accessible internet and very effective online communications platforms, without significant decreases in productivity. These factors require Cities Alliance to rethink its own approach to development.

Work flexibility and digitalisation. Redesign the workplace.

The lockdowns have answered positively the vexing question of whether development/ knowledge workers supported by the right technology can work away from the office without losing productivity. In a post lockdown world, the

Cities Alliance will assess how it can reduce its corporate rents and overheads while promoting more flexibility. It will do so mindful that these new arrangements should not negatively impact creativity and innovation or impair staff from building the relationships and collaboration that are necessary to maintain the organisation's identity.

Organisational structure and business development.

The potential decrease in aid budgets requires action on two fronts. First, the Cities Alliance must be as light, flexible, results-focused and high value-for-money as possible so that it is not a financial strain on pressured donors and can leverage real institutional delivery capacity through its members and, by association, UNOPS. Second, the Cities Alliance needs to re-evaluate its current approach to business development, with more bold actions towards less traditional sources of funding, such as MDBs, the private sector, high-net-worth individuals, and blended finance in projects. This also implies re-assessing current priorities, structures, and distribution of responsibilities, looking specifically at the effectiveness of the regional level vis-à-vis the current restricted funding environment.

Effectiveness on the ground.

As mentioned, aid development must be increasingly justified within the changed international development landscape. The strong emphasis on tangible results and value for money in donor investments will continue to be fundamental parameters for the allocation of resources. It is therefore essential that the selection of projects in the Cities Alliance portfolio meet these requirements, and that the orientation of business development shifts towards prioritising projects that can deliver concrete and measurable developmental results.





F.

CORE VALUES, OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES, AND INTEGRATED THEMES

Human Rights

Because it is hosted on a United Nations platform and is informed by extensive experience of exclusion and discrimination carried out in the name of development, the Cities Alliance is guided by an overarching human rights framework that provides the moral, developmental, and legal basis of our activities.

Local Ownership

The Cities Alliance is committed to the principle of local ownership and, in its activities, works closely with national and local governments and the national associations of local governments so that development decisions can be taken at the lowest effective level of government.

Partnership

The Cities Alliance is primarily a vehicle for partnership, operating to improve the quality and efficiency of efforts to address urban poverty. Cities Alliance promotes synergies, alignment and peer-learning between members, governments, slum dwellers, NGOs and other partners.

Conflict Sensitivity

The Cities Alliance seeks positive transformation within the contexts in which we operate. Cities Alliance embeds a conflict-sensitive approach throughout the project cycle. We utilise stakeholder and risk mapping, management, and gender analyses to monitor tensions and conflicts and to reduce them within the scope of our interventions.

Capacity Development

Fostering long-term individual and institutional capacity is a crucial pillar underpinning Cities Alliance programmes. Institutional capacity promotes ownership and empowerment and decreases the reliance on donors and external expertise.

Effective Governance

The starting point for any successful city is effective governance, including the impartial application of the rule of law, transparency, accountability to all citizens, and meaningful civic participation. All cities need clearly defined autonomy, authority, and resources provided within a national policy environment that codifies institutional, legal, and fiscal arrangements.

Youth Opportunities

The starting point for any successful city is effective governance, including the impartial application of the rule of law, transparency, accountability to all citizens, and meaningful civic participation. All cities need clearly defined autonomy, authority, and resources provided within a national policy environment that codifies institutional, legal, and fiscal arrangements.

Environment and Resilience

The Cities Alliance strongly believes that the relationship between the built form and the natural environment is fundamental to achieving the goal of sustainable and equitable cities. Cities Alliance is committed to respecting and promoting environmental principles in all its programmes and in its corporate behaviours.

Gender Equality

The Cities Alliance strongly believes that gender equality holds the key to addressing many of the problems faced by cities and the urban poor. Cities Alliance mainstreams a gender equality approach, incorporating gender perspectives in participation, resourcing, design, evaluation, and decision-making processes and in its corporate behaviours.

Participation of the Urban Poor

Empowered, informed residents and the participation of the urban poor in urban development are essential components of sustainable urban management. Cities Alliance works directly with civil society to promote urban citizenship and inclusion in decision making at all levels.

OUTLINE THEORY OF CHANGE AND CORPORATE RESULTS FRAMEWORK

The Cities Alliance has utilised a tiered results framework since 2013 to manage and track progress towards strategic objectives and development results at the corporate level. The Corporate Results Framework (CRF) allows for aggregation across the operational portfolio of the organisation and is reported annually through the Corporate Scorecard. The CRF and Scorecards are available on the Cities Alliance website.

The indicators which constitute the CRF have been developed to allow a degree of aggregation across programmes and projects and are only a small fraction of the metrics utilised by the Cities Alliance across its portfolio. In fact, Cities Alliance projects and programmes all have individual results frameworks or logframes that are highly specific to the intended results, sector, context, and funder. They also include full monitoring, evaluation, and learning plans, baseline/targets,

and qualitative, participatory, and complexity-aware approaches.

The CRF is built around a pathway of change that articulates Secretariat outputs into longer-term development impact and is ultimately aligned to the organisation's mission and vision, as well as the strategic objective of this plan. Broadly defined, the city is the client of Cities Alliance, while the ultimate beneficiaries of Cities Alliance's activities are the urban poor. The logic model is not a classical linear model of change, but instead captures the multiple routes the strategy takes to deliver impact with different degrees of attribution and contribution.

The CRF is articulated into four tiers. The first tier (Tier I) is primarily contextual, but necessary to situate Cities Alliance's work within the broader SDG mission.



TIER I: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS.

The Cities Alliance contributes to the achievement of the SDGs, with an emphasis on Goals 1 and 11.

CONTEXT (TIER I) - SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS	SDG REF.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements, or inadequate housing. 	11.1.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of population below the international poverty line (by sex, age, employment status, and geographical location). 	1.1.1



TIER II: DEVELOPMENT IMPACT.

The Cities Alliance's aim is to enable cities to run more effectively, deliver improved and responsive services to the urban poor, be inclusive, and foster equal economic opportunities. These objectives are tracked in the developmental impact indicators.

TIER II - DEVELOPMENTAL IMPACT ON CITIES	SDG REF.
<i>Indicators to track contribution and the developmental impact on client cities that Cities Alliance targets through (i) legal/policy change; (ii) infrastructure interventions; and (iii) larger follow-up investments by development partners and MDBs.</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average municipal expenditure per person per year on basic services. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of population in slum and/or low-income areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using safely managed drinking water services 	6.1.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using safely managed sanitation services, including a handwashing facility with soap and water; and 	6.2.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With regular access to solid waste collection. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure right to land in slum/or low-income areas. 	1.4.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of seats held by women in local governments. 	5.5.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average rating of the informal economy working environment. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of youth not in education, employment, or training. 	8.5.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of cities with migration policies to facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people. 	10.7.2

TIER III: PROGRAMMATIC OUTCOMES.

To contribute to the development impact of Tier II, Cities Alliance aims to directly influence local authorities and the living conditions of the urban poor. This influence will be delivered against the thematic area objectives of this Strategic Plan. At this tier, results are achieved through investments in low-income settlements that address the symptoms of slums, most obviously the lack of services, poorly located settlements, insecure tenure, and poor housing. However, tackling the root causes of social exclusion and urban poverty is equally important and requires a more comprehensive, citywide approach that includes financial, governance, and policy interventions. The goal is well-run and resourced cities that allow citizens to exercise their rights and responsibilities as part of a shared vision for their city. Cities Alliance delivers change through three main pathways:

- Direct impact through community-led, gender-responsive, and resilient infrastructure; incremental housing; strengthening informal sectors and their integration into the formal value chain; youth opportunity interventions; and SME strengthening which directly affect livelihoods, access to services, and health for low-income households.
- Less direct impact through the preparation and influence of larger-scale investments: diagnostics, planning and project preparations, and targeted efforts to partner with and engage MDBs to achieve improved access to services, livelihoods, and health for the urban poor.
- The third approach – more indirect and longer term – targets transformative impact through the strengthening of local and national institutions through technical

assistance to foster significant changes in how cities are conceived and managed, their capacity, and use of financial resources.

Realising this impact depends heavily on capturing evidence-based learning from country and city-level experiences and piloting, mainstreaming, and applying this knowledge in projects as well as

disseminating it to the global urban development community.

Indicators at this tier are thematic-neutral to allow for easier aggregation across the portfolio. They will be disaggregated across the themes of the Strategic Plan and used to track performance against focus area objectives.

TIER III - PROGRAMMATIC OUTCOMES

Indicators to track the direct results of activities financed by the Cities Alliance and implemented either directly or by city stakeholders, members or partners. They will be disaggregated by the Thematic Areas.

PROGRAMME BENEFICIARIES AND LEVERAGE

- Number of community infrastructure projects constructed.
Disaggregated by type of project: improved access to safe water; improved sanitation; improved solid waste collection; improved climate adaptation; improved climate mitigation; access to services for migrants; gender-responsive infrastructure.
- Number of beneficiaries (M/F) of services (Direct)⁵.
Disaggregated by: Number of individuals with strengthened tenure; number of individuals with upgraded or more resilient housing; number of beneficiaries of community infrastructure projects; number of individuals with improved livelihoods; number of individuals benefitting from community-based adaptation to climate change or nature-based solutions; number of migrants and displaced persons who gained access to services; number of individuals completing vocational training; and number of individuals with strengthened capacities.
- Amount of funds (USD) leveraged for cities.
- Number of beneficiaries of leveraged investments (Indirect).
- Number of beneficiaries of Cities Alliance-supported policies, plans and strategies that are implemented (Indirect).
- Number of urban dialogues which deliver strategic, policy and/or normative influence.
Disaggregated by: Influential dialogues incorporating solutions to tenure; basic services; housing for the urban poor; local economic development; climate resilience; climate mitigation; environmental restoration; migration management; gender inclusion.

URBAN POLICIES

- Number of urban development policies i) developed, ii) endorsed, iii) enacted, iii) implemented, iv) updated.
Disaggregated by: Policies incorporating solutions to tenure; basic services; housing for the urban poor; local economic development; climate resilience; climate mitigation; environmental restoration; migration management and migrant rights; and gender inclusion.
Tracked by milestone indicators 1. Policies developed, 2. Policies endorsed, 3. Policies enacted, 4. Policies implemented.

⁵ Data to be collected based on population/usage estimates. Each beneficiary will only be counted once, and where there is risk of overlap, only the larger of the data estimates will be aggregated.

URBAN PLANS

- Number of city/sector development strategies and plans i) developed, ii) partially implemented, iii) fully implemented.
Disaggregated by: Strategies and plans incorporating solutions to tenure; basic services; housing for the urban poor; local economic development; climate resilience; climate mitigation; environmental restoration; migration management and migrant rights; and gender inclusion.
Tracked by milestone indicators 1. Plans, strategies developed, 2. Plans, strategies partially implemented, iii) Plans, strategies fully implemented.

URBAN CAPACITIES

- Number of urban institutions/individuals with strengthened capacities.
- Number of toolkits and other technical assistance products with evidence of uptake by stakeholders and/or beneficiaries.
Disaggregated by: Toolkits and other technical assistance products incorporating solutions to tenure; basic services; housing for the urban poor; local economic development; climate resilience; climate mitigation; environmental restoration; migration management; and gender inclusion.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

- Number of slum dweller federations strengthened.
- Number of regularly functioning mechanisms developed to engage communities and civil society in urban governance.

TIER IV: SECRETARIAT PERFORMANCE.

The effective day-to-day operations of the Secretariat are critical to the theory of change. Successfully delivering the mission of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 requires organisational changes

aimed at optimising the efficiency and flexibility of the Secretariat. These are our organisational enablers. Secretariat indicators track the quality of integration of gender, climate resilience, and youth opportunities, allowing the organisation to continuously track its performance and to improve its systems and processes.

TIER IV - PROGRAMME KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Key performance indicators to track the performance of the Secretariat, including metrics to track complex performance measures such as the quality of gender and climate resilience integration.

- Gender and Climate Resilience Integration Index indicators
- Partnership indicators
- Volume indicators
- Efficiency indicators
- Sustainability indicators

LIST OF CITIES ALLIANCE MEMBERS

Includes date of joining or re-joining.

Local Authorities

- C40 (2018)
- Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) (2015)
- ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability (2015)
- Metropolis (1999)
- United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) (1999, current denomination since 2004)

Governments and Bilateral Agencies

- France (1999)
- Germany (1999)
- Ghana (2016)
- South Africa (2006)
- Sweden (1999)
- Switzerland: SECO (2014), SDC (2017)
- Uganda (2018)
- United States (1999/2017)

Non-Governmental Organisations

- AVSI Foundation (2015)

- Habitat for Humanity International (2010)
- Reall (2019)
- Slum Dwellers International (SDI) (2007)
- Women In Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) (2015)

Multilateral Organisations

- The World Bank (founding member - 1999)
- UN-Habitat (founding member - 1999)

Universities, Research Centres, and Knowledge Networks

- The Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS) of Erasmus University, Rotterdam (2015)
- International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) (2017)

Associate Members

- UNICEF (2021)

Cities Alliance

Cities Without Slums

Hosted by



UNOPS

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