

# MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT FORA AND COMMUNITY UPGRADING FUND – BEST PRACTICES TO ENHANCE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN SECONDARY CITIES

Technical paper CRRF: Inclusive Urban Development and  
Mobility - Regional Network and Dialogue Action

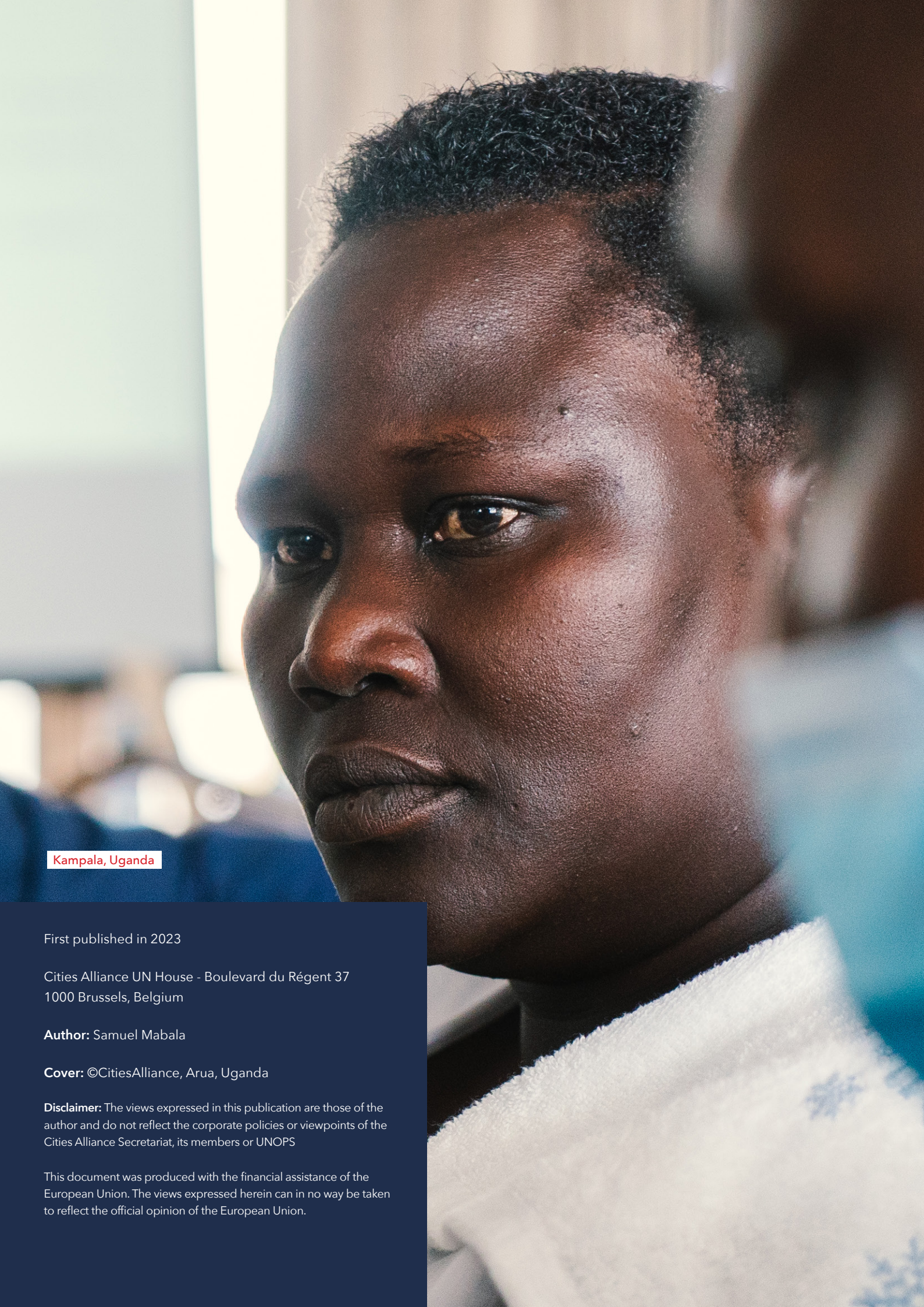
By Samuel Mabala, Country Urban Advisor, Cities Alliance, Uganda



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Cities Alliance UN House - Boulevard du Régent 37  
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**Author:** Samuel Mabala

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<b>Introduction</b> .....	03
<b>Background</b> .....	04
Rationale .....	05
The history of mdf and CUF interventions .....	05
<b>The municipal development forum</b> ....	07
Components.....	07
Guiding principles .....	09
Roles and responsibilities .....	09
Areas of involvement.....	10
Lessons from uganda .....	11
<b>The community upgrading fund</b> .....	12
Funding and grants .....	12
Eligibility .....	12
Application process.....	13
Evaluation process.....	13
Grant distribution process .....	14
Community contracting guidelines .....	14
Examples of cuf projects.....	15
Comparing the experiences of Liberia and Uganda .....	17
<b>Reflections</b> .....	18
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	19

## OVERVIEW

This report is based on the first peer-learning event in a series of five dedicated to each changing experiences with representatives of partner cities and community stakeholders to strengthen policy development for greater social cohesion.

The meeting was held in Arua, Uganda from 23 to 24 March 2021.

It included partner organisations from Kakuma and Kaolbeyei (Kenya), Gabiley and Borama (Somalia), Arua and Koboko (Uganda), Jigjiga and Assosa (Ethiopia), and other regional community stakeholders.

The CRRF: Inclusive Urban Development and Mobility - Regional Network and Dialogue Action aims to support secondary cities through regional networking and dialogue so that best practices and lessons learned can be exchanged to identify solutions for improving service provision.

These exchanges are intended to improve the living condition and opportunities for refugees and their hosts as the risks of rivalry and conflict are reduced, resulting in greater well-being and safety.



Arua, Uganda

# INTRODUCTION

**Cities in the Horn of Africa are experiencing high levels of urbanization. By 2040, Kampala is set to become a global megacity of more than 10 million people. This trend goes beyond capital cities; secondary cities are also seeing rapid demographic growth as a result of high rural-to-urban migration, natural increase, and uncontrolled expansion of urban areas into the rural hinterland.**

This growth has significant implications for cities, including informality, urban poverty, unemployment, proliferation of slums and informal settlements, and inadequate access to basic urban services. Adding to the mix, refugees are increasingly settling in cities; today, an estimated 60% of refugees globally live in urban or semi-urban areas instead of camps or purpose-built rural settlements. This issue is especially pressing for cities in the Horn of Africa, which hosts one fifth of the world's refugees.

Displaced populations tend to settle in areas where the urban poor and other migrants live, which are typically slums or informal settlements with limited capacity to deliver services, informal economies, and marginal or no benefit to tax revenues from local business. National governments and cities lack the capacity to effectively respond to the challenges posed by this trend, and previous attempts to upgrade slum settlements have not been sustainable. Urban authorities must recognize and involve the urban poor as key partners in urban development – one of the foundations for inclusive good urban governance.

Cities Alliance has promoted the role of multi-stakeholder fora as platforms for participation and dialogue among urban citizens, including host communities and displaced populations, to exchange knowledge and inform local policies, plans, and budgets. These fora are strong mechanisms for promoting social cohesion and improving living conditions in the city. Another such mechanism is the Community Upgrading Fund (CUF), a facility that supports small community infrastructure improvements in slums and boosts progressive transformation in urban communities and likewise improves living conditions.

This paper presents the role of the Municipal Development Forum (MDF) and the CUF in enhancing partnerships and social cohesion in secondary cities, with case studies from Uganda and experiences from Liberia. Both mechanisms bring government and residents together to form a development partnership. By working together, with government and communities each providing specific services, the process of formalizing the city begins. These partnerships build or rebuild the necessary relationship structure to lay the foundations for establishing a municipal identity striving for common projects.

This paper does not advocate a “cookie cutter” approach to either mechanism. It does, however, highlight core principles that are universally relevant, with much scope to develop a solution specific to the needs of different contexts.

## BACKGROUND

Good urban governance is essential for the prosperity of a nation and its citizens. For governance to be effective, it must be participatory, transparent, accountable, equitable and meaningful. When a state or a given urban authority governs effectively, its citizens are empowered. They gain a variety of political goods: security, civil and political rights and freedoms, the rule of law, political stability and pluralism, trust, public goods (such as roads and hospitals), and the efficient management of public resources, among others.

The effective delivery of these goods by the state creates an institutional framework that provides citizens with the correct freedoms and incentives to achieve growth and development. Doornbos (2003) states that “when there is good governance, there is sustainable development.”<sup>1</sup> The provision of such an institutional framework that promotes good governance is the determinant of a strong state, as it alleviates poverty, advances development, and creates an environment for citizens and the nation as a whole to prosper.

In its first Country Programme, Cities Alliance supported the Government of Uganda to implement the secondary cities programme Transforming the Settlements of the Urban Poor in Uganda (TSUPU). One of TSUPU’s components took the concept of the World Urban Forum as a space for global dialogue and applied it to the national and municipal level in Uganda. The Uganda National Urban Forum was created to bring together key stakeholders at the national level to address urban development issues. Similar fora were also established at the municipal and settlement levels to promote multi-stakeholder participation in the policy, planning, and budgeting process.

Cities Alliance also supported the Government of Uganda in preparing a National Urban Policy as a comprehensive framework to guide quality,



*“Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development.”*

– Kofi Annan,  
**Former UN Secretary-General**



sustainable urbanization. The National Urban Policy of 2017, in particular policy objective No. 5, is oriented towards the “promotion of good urban governance,” while strategy No. 4 focuses on the intervention of “establishment and rolling-out of functional Urban Development Forums across all the urban hierarchies.” These hierarchies include cities, divisions or municipalities, municipal division or town councils, town boards, and the local settlement level.

<sup>1</sup> Doornbos, Martin. ““Good Governance”: The Metamorphosis of a Policy Metaphor.” *Journal of International Affairs* 57, no. 1 (2003): 3-17. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24357910>.

## RATIONALE

The rationale of the urban forum is based on the need to promote partnership and social cohesion to raise the profile of urban development issues, concerns, economic opportunities, and challenges at the national and local level, with the goal of promoting inclusive debates towards improved sustainable urbanization strategies, policies, and programmes. The forum also provides an opportunity for multi-stakeholder engagement to realize the rights of the urban poor and improve their wellbeing.

The urban forum seeks to improve urban governance, enable delivery of quality affordable basic services accessible to all urban residents, and transform low-income or urban poor communities. It unites their voices in a way that supplements and complements government efforts. Accordingly, the need to improve community infrastructure as part of the progressive upgrading of the settlements of the urban poor can benefit from a Community Upgrading Fund to provide small grants for projects identified at the settlement level. The overall goal of the CUF is to enable slum

dweller, settlement-based, community organizations to access grants to finance initiatives that meet community needs under clearly defined criteria.

The rationale for both the MDF and CUF derive from the need to enhance partnerships and participatory, inclusive development that responds to the needs of the urban poor and service delivery gaps, mainly in informal settlements. This enables the urban poor to have a voice and contribute meaningfully to urban transformative approaches that they can relate to now and in the future. The Urban Forum philosophy is also premised on the need to operationalize the New Urban Agenda 2016, under section 48 which calls for the establishment of urban forums with the aim of identifying opportunities for urban economic development and identify as well as address the existing and emerging urban challenges.



Kakuma, Kenya

## THE HISTORY OF MDF AND CUF INTERVENTIONS

Both the national and municipal development fora and the CUF were implemented as part of the Transforming the Settlements of the Urban Poor (TSUPU) initiative between

2011 and 2014 in five municipalities in Uganda: Arua, Jinja, Kabale, Mbale, and Mbarara. They were established as mechanisms where organized urban poor, local government, service providers, private sector and other stakeholders could meet on a regular basis to exchange views, debate priorities, and agree on common actions. They were convened and supported by local authorities. Different stakeholders formed a management body for each forum, with the chair typically rotating among them.

Launched in 2010, the Uganda Country Programme began with the TSUPU programme. Working closely with the Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD), the programme produced a national urban policy to guide more inclusive development and formed active urban forums that provide the space for participatory urban planning and policy making at the national and municipal levels.

The programme fostered strong partnerships and a culture of dialogue that is underpinning urban development efforts and has already had a significant impact. The percentage of city residents living in slums decreased by 10%; average municipal expenditures increased by 168% per person; and the average percentage of low-income households with regular electricity connections increased by 43% between 2013-16.

The forum is a basic institution informing pro-poor approaches to urban development at the municipal level, which implies significant representation from the communities of the urban poor. It should ultimately be institutionalized and formalized, as it is the fundamental building block towards good governance and the creation of ongoing public community partnerships. It is essential that refugees, host communities, women and youth participate in the forum and share their different perceptions, needs, roles and responsibilities in the urban setting.

Municipal Development Forums, which were designed to bring all stakeholders into the urban development process, have been made statutory bodies in Uganda. Empowered, informed residents and the participation of the urban poor in urban development at the local and national levels are essential components of sustainable urban management. The New Urban Agenda Section 48 argues that urban fora are intended to identify opportunities for urban economic development and both identify and address existing and emerging challenges. In Uganda, MDFs are currently operational in 26 municipalities: Apac, Arua, Bushenyi-Ishaka, Busia, Entebbe, Fort Portal, Gulu, Hoima Soroti, Jinja, Kabale, Kamuli, Kasese, Kira, Kitgum, Lira, Lugazi, Masaka, Masindi, Mbale, Mbarara, Moroto, Mubende, Mukono, Ntungamo, and Tororo.



*“The Urban Space, especially in the developing countries like Uganda, has multifaceted complexities in service delivery in terms of challenges and opportunities.*

*This is therefore to urge the Authorities to embrace the MDF and support their establishment for purposes of inclusive good urban governance practices that are responsive to the needs and concerns of the urban citizenry and thus the Municipal Development Forums are one of the avenues to achieve the ultimate goal of transformed and sustainable urban areas that are inclusive, safe, productive, competitive, functional and resilient for sustainable urban development and the overall improved quality of life of both the urban, peri-urban and rural areas in Uganda.*

- Stephen Bogere, **National Coordinator of the MDFs for Uganda’s Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development**, in an interview by District Focus, 30 January 2021. <https://districtfocus.co.ug/transformational-role-of-municipal-development-forums-in-urban-areas>.



# THE MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM

The composition and membership of a multi-stakeholder municipal development forum will differ from one city to another. This paper has been developed with an understanding of the differences and the unique attributes that exist in the various urban areas. This section provides an overview of the institution, its components, various principles and responsibilities, and some lessons derived from the Ugandan experience.

## COMPONENTS

A typical municipal development forum will include a General Assembly (or Council) and an Executive Committee to oversee activities. Some also have thematic working groups (featuring Executive Committee members and experts in relevant areas), a secretariat, and fora at the municipal or settlement level.

### **The General Assembly**

The highest authority of the municipal development forum is the General Assembly, also referred to as the Council. Its membership includes, but is not limited to, the private sector, local authorities, civil society and faith-based organizations, slum dweller federations, community-based and refugee-led organizations, cultural institutions, the media, academia, and development partners.

The Council appoints a patron as overseer of the urban forum. It holds one annual summit at a date determined by the Executive Committee. The Council also convenes when an Executive Committee election is organized, and its decisions are approved by simple majority with a minimum of one third of members in attendance.

### **The Executive Committee**

The steering body of the forum, the Executive Committee typically comprises a president, vice president, secretary, mobilizer, treasurer, committee members, and a patron/overall advisor. It is established by the General Assembly, where each constituency elects a representative to the committee based on stakeholder mapping of the urban area. The committee elects its leadership positions, with exception of the patron. The patron is selected from amongst the past presidents of the forum or leaders of society. The patron advises new members of the Executive Committee on how to execute the functions of the forum, such as dispute resolution.

## The Secretariat

**The Secretariat is hosted by the Municipal Authority, with the Community Development Officer serving as the Secretary of the Executive Committee. The functions of the Secretariat include:**

- Convening quarterly meetings of the Executive Committee, bimonthly meetings of the Technical Working Groups, and the Annual Urban/City Summit;
- Maintaining records of the MDF proceedings;
- Forwarding the recommendations and resolutions of the MDF to the mayor for consideration and adoption;
- Organizing site visits for the Executive Committee to monitor implementation of city projects, observe challenges, and propose remedial action; and
- Implementing and facilitating the realization of objectives, policies, and decisions of the General Assembly, as directed by the Executive Committee.

## The Thematic Working Groups

The Thematic Working Groups are set up as the working Sub-Committees of the MDF. They identify the critical thematic issues affecting the municipality. The groups investigate and analyze the critical issues identified as barriers to the effective, efficient functioning of the city and propose recommendations for the MDF to consider.

This involves coordinating and documenting prevalent stakeholder's category needs and issues, and then present them to the MDF Executive Committee for deliberation, prioritization, and submission to Council for resolution and adoption. The working groups also document and share problems identified in their respective thematic areas with the MDFs Executive Committees, Municipal Councils and MLHUD. They also propose appropriate recommendations on how best thematic critical issues and challenges can be addressed effectively.



## The Local Municipal Forum

These are platforms for dialogues at the lower levels of administration such as the Division, the Ward or even at Settlement level. They bring together all the stakeholders at the local level to discuss key issues at that level and forward them to the higher level MDF for incorporation in the plans and recommendations to the Council. They identify key local projects that are forwarded for inclusion in the Municipal plans and budgets. They also mobilize local communities for participation in community works such as cleaning their neighbourhood, maintaining their community infrastructure, publicity campaigns, etc.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Urban fora are guided by the following set of principles:

- **All stakeholders have a collective responsibility in sustainable urban development** to promote good urban governance, principles of participation and rule of law, responsiveness, equity and inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, consensus orientation, effectiveness, and efficiency.
- **They convene** public dialogues and debates on pressing urban challenges.
- **They work** towards an integrated planning framework for sustainable urban development.
- **They promote** effective coordination among all urban stakeholders as well as local cooperation arrangements and networking.
- **The core** of the forum is bottom-up, broad-based stakeholder participation.
- **They promote** innovation and creativity to generate practical, applicable solutions to common urban challenges.
- **They facilitate** lobbying, advocacy, partnerships, and resource mobilization.
- **They build** trust and relationships among different urban communities to resolve conflicts as they arise.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

At the municipal level, the urban forum:



1. **Serves as the voice of the people.** The forum collects the views, opinions, and proposals of residents (women and men) and presents them to the district, municipal, or town council. It maintains close contact with residents and consults them on municipal issues. The forum also provides technical support and information to help stakeholders make informed decisions in the local development planning process. For example, MDFs have been key to convincing citizens to offer portions of their land at no cost to pave the way for infrastructure development or upgrading.
-



2. **Helps mobilize revenue.** The forum serves as a space to educate residents on tax payments in collaboration with the local administration and ensures that the resources mobilized are utilized effectively and with transparency. It also maintains frequent contact with organized, productive economic groups and other entities in the area to spur private sector development and local economic development which in turn creates opportunities for inclusive revenue mobilization.



3. **Oversees development activities.** The forum monitors all development activities in the local area – such as infrastructure development for roads, health centres, schools, markets, and bus parks – and connects various project activities with appropriate line ministries. It also ensures that inputs received from development partners are utilized efficiently and plays a role in mediating grievances and handling complaints.



4. **Promotes partnership and social cohesion.** The forum mobilizes ward members to actively participate in development activities and promotes community ownership. It also sensitizes local communities on urban-related drives, facilitates urban campaigns (such as Keep the City Clean for improved sanitation, hygiene, and municipal waste management), and holds public dialogues, debates, and meetings on topics of interest.

## AREAS OF INVOLVEMENT

- **Urban fora** have been recognized as key players that interface with the community and bridge gaps in urban service delivery. They have been involved in areas including:
- **Keeping** municipalities clean through effective municipal waste management.
- **Engaging** in dialogue with people affected by a project to ensure that no one is made worse off by the intervention (as in the construction of the Kampala-Jinja Expressway project<sup>2</sup>).
- **Safeguarding** people's right to safety through urban health and security.
- **Facilitating** campaigns to enhance local revenue collection.
- **Enhancing** participatory and inclusive urban governance.
- **Strengthening** monitoring, evaluation, and accountability functions.

There has been increasing demand for urban fora to perform other functions, such as assisting with revenue collection. The Local Government Finance Commission (LGFC) of Uganda noted that MDFs can help close many loopholes in local revenue collection, thus allowing the local governments to generate more revenue.

## LESSONS FROM UGANDA

The experience of rolling out urban fora in Uganda has highlighted the positive impact they can have on development.

The Ugandan fora have:

- Actively influenced and increased citizens' participation in the implementation of government programmes and projects.
- Responsively promoted and increased transparency and accountability.
- Actively influenced prioritization of government programmes that are geared towards improving urban governance, growth, and development.
- Played a critical role in enhancing a sense of community ownership of government projects and programmes through participation and active engagement.
- Promoted a bottom-up approach to planning that is key in contexts of decentralization.
- Played a critical role in tapping leadership potential among members. For example, some former members and leaders of urban forums or MDFs have gone on to take up political leadership positions representing their constituencies in parliament.
- Acted as an effective vehicle for information sharing among urban residents.
- Acted as mechanisms of conflict prevention through the provision of a space for discussion.

- 2 The Kampala-Jinja Expressway (KJE) is an infrastructure project to develop a limited access tolled expressway in the central and eastern region of Uganda in East Africa. The project is financed by a consortium including Government of Uganda, the European Union, Agence Française de Développement and the African Development Bank. The Cities Alliance Country Programme in Uganda is implementing the KJE No One Worse Off project to facilitate a smooth relocation of affected communities following global safeguard standards.



*"The city development forum presents a unique signage for inclusive sustainable urban development through its broad based stakeholder representation with different skills or careers , being nonpartisan and transparent. It is able to achieve effective and participatory engagement of development partners, and other stakeholders from the initial stage through dialogues, hence preventing conflicts."*

– Sikita Catherine,  
**Community Development Fund Refugee Representative, SSURA**



Kakuma, Kenya

# THE COMMUNITY UPGRADING FUND

The Community Upgrading Fund is a financing mechanism that allows slum dweller, settlement-based community organizations to access grants and financing for small infrastructure initiatives that meet the community's basic needs under clearly defined criteria.

## It aims to:

- **Finance** small projects that generate a measurable impact on the quality of life of slum dwellers;
- **Increase** the capacity of urban poor organizations in participatory planning and participation;
- **Establish** constructive partnerships between local government and local-level urban poor organizations; and
- **Strengthen** the systems of local governance and municipal service provision.

## FUNDING AND GRANTS

### Sources of funding

The Government of Uganda, municipal councils, international agencies (including NGOs) and the private sector can contribute to the fund. Communities can also contribute to these projects by providing cash, labour, land, and other resources, such as operation and maintenance.

### Size of grants and awards

Grant awards typically ranged from UGX five million to UGX 30 million (US \$15,000), with the amount depending on the project's scope, timeframe, and need.

**Note:** The CUF mechanism should include the possibility for grant application and community procurement.

## ELIGIBILITY

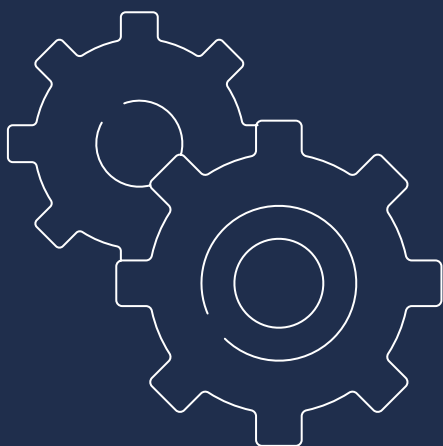
Only Settlement-based Community Organizations (SBCO) and Settlement-Level Urban Poor Organizations (SLUPO) can utilize the CUF. Non-governmental organizations are not eligible to apply for CUF funds.

The CUF does not fund large infrastructure or single family projects, purchase of motor vehicles, individual career development, land purchase or compensation, association publicity/ functions, or workshops or seminars not related to a project activity. Applications are subject to verification by the MDF (more on the verification process next page).

## APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process is straightforward, with guidance for applicants along the way:

1. A Call for Proposals is announced by the Secretariat and date set for an informational meeting for interested organizations and associations.
2. Technical officials or Community Development Officers (CDOs) help orient prospective applicants, who then complete the grant application form.
3. The proposal is submitted to the municipal secretariat coordinator that hosts the CUF (or serves as its secretary).
4. Organizations receive a letter confirming receipt of their application. At that point, the application cannot be returned.
5. Organizations wishing to withdraw an application can write to the secretariat at the municipal or city level, and application will not be considered for evaluation. There will be no penalty for withdrawing an application before it is considered.
6. All approved applications must be implemented to a satisfactory conclusion as specified in the grant agreement.



## EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation process comprises the following steps:

1. Applications are received by the Municipal Community Development Officer, who also serves as Secretary of the MDF and CUF.
2. Municipal coordinators prepare a list of proposals (organization, location, name, and title of project).
3. The list of proposals is presented at the MDF, which verifies the organizations and confirms that the projects are needed.
4. The project user committee, the committee which oversees the management and operations as well as other administrative functions, appoints an evaluation committee to review the proposals.
5. The evaluation committee meets to consider the proposals based on agreed criteria (see next section) and prepares a report.
6. The evaluation committee submits the report to the CUF Board through the town/city clerk's office or municipal coordinator, who refers them on to the CUF/ Advisory Board for discussion.
7. The CUF/ Advisory Board approves and/or makes final decisions on proposals.
8. The municipality coordinator communicates the decision to groups within two weeks of receiving feedback from the CUF Board.
9. The municipality contracts committee issues the contract for the project as part of technical support to the CUF secretariat.
10. 10. been approved for financing will be trained in accountability, monitoring progress and reporting, procurement procedures, and guidelines under CUF.
11. The municipal secretariat releases funds according to the contract.

## Criteria for evaluation

Proposals for CUF funding are evaluated against the following criteria:

- **The ability** of the proposal to generate the anticipated outputs as well as managerial capacity.
- **The project** is in line with the priorities of the MDF and its linkages with ongoing community interventions.
- **The quality** of collective and participatory decision-making process at the community level.
- **There is a high level of ownership and management** of the process/implementation by the community-based organizations.
- **The proposal** targets community endorsement and demonstrates willingness to contribute to the project.
- **The quality** of multi-stakeholder partnerships sought at the grassroots level.
- **The level** of innovation, coordination, and collaboration.
- **The proposal** includes livelihood support, particularly for markets.
- **Value for money** in relation to cost.
- **Ability of the project to have a wider impact** on the community with the potential for replication.
- **Quality of social and environmental impact.**

## GRANT DISTRIBUTION PROCESS

Grants will be disbursed in tranches of UGX 10 million maximum, depending on the size of the grant. Release of second disbursement will be based on progress performance reports.

## COMMUNITY CONTRACTING GUIDELINES

In community contracting approach, the community group negotiates with a local government or development programme and enters into a contractual agreement to undertake an activity that improves their livelihoods. The combination of labour-based methods with community participation has advantages in terms of community empowerment, job creation, and income generation, as well as capacity-building and partnership development.

Delivering goods and services under the CUF involves: **a)** calling for the participation of local urban poor community associations and/or NGOs in civil works and the delivery of non-consulting services; **b)** increasing the utilization of local know-how, goods, and materials; or **c)** employing labour-intensive and other appropriate technologies. The procurement procedures, specifications, and contract packaging within the CUF at this level should be adapted to reflect these considerations.



The principles of Community Driven Development (CDD) are used to procure small-value contracts for goods and services, both non-consulting and consulting, and small works scattered in the municipalities. These include de-silting drainage channels, solid waste management, secondary city greening and beautification programmes, and other small contracts specific to the municipalities. Procedures include shopping; local competitive bidding that invites prospective bidders for goods and works in and around the community; direct contracting for small-value goods, works, and non-consulting services; and the use of community labour and resources.

## EXAMPLES OF CUF PROJECTS

All projects funded through the CUF aim to promote rapid and visible progress on improving living and working conditions of the urban poor. One hundred and twentythree community upgrading infrastructure projects were implemented using the Community Upgrading Fund participatory approach in five secondary cities in Uganda, utilizing US \$1.44 million.

Some of the projects that were implemented with funding from the CUF in Uganda are highlighted below.



*“The CUF approach which was embedded within the TSUPU programme enhanced and galvanized a sense of belonging of community infrastructure sub-projects among the urban poor in the five TSUPU implementing municipalities including Arua. The CUF methodology has now been integrated in the municipal planning and budgeting approaches, where communities are meaningfully engaged on the key priority subprojects which are critical in livelihood improvement among the urban citizenry. The CUF and MDF approaches have positioned Uganda as a learning centre for inclusive and participatory governance.”*

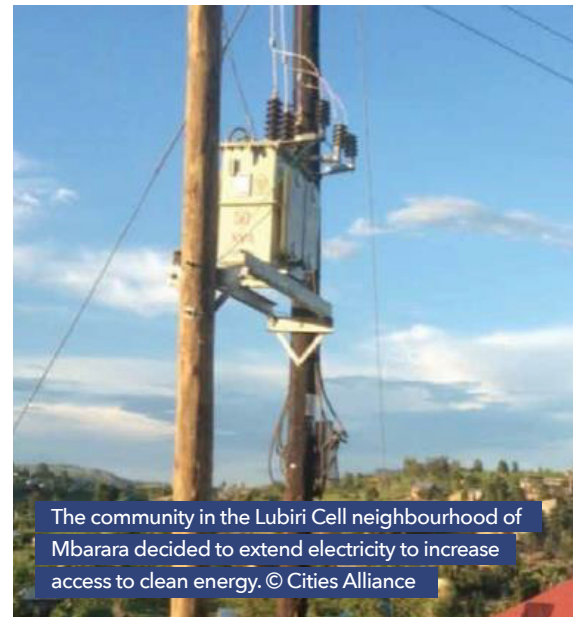
- **Stephen Bogere**, National Coordinator of MDFs, Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development of Uganda



Arua, Uganda



The community built a classroom block for Busamaga Community Secondary School in Mbale to accommodate more pupils. © Cities Alliance



The community in the Lubiri Cell neighbourhood of Mbarara decided to extend electricity to increase access to clean energy. © Cities Alliance



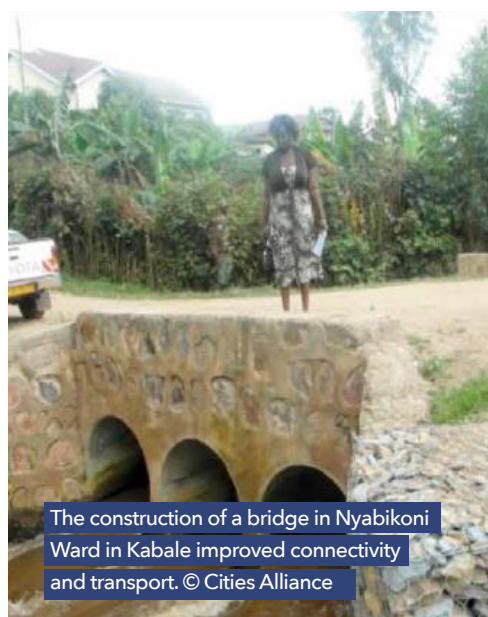
The community in Awindiri Ward, Arua extended water and water reservoir tanks to increase reliable access to water. © Cities Alliance



Masonko community on Kisima Island renovated its local maternity ward, which was in a deplorable state of repair. © Cities Alliance



The CUF supported the construction of a sanitation unit with toilet and bathing facilities in Masese landing site. © Cities Alliance



The construction of a bridge in Nyabikoni Ward in Kabale improved connectivity and transport. © Cities Alliance



The fencing around Mvara Junior Primary School in Arua improved security and its performance in the primary leaving examinations. © Cities Alliance

## COMPARING THE EXPERIENCES OF LIBERIA AND UGANDA

In Liberia and Uganda, the CUF targets small infrastructure projects for the urban poor that will have a measurable impact on the quality of life and/or working environment, and the CUF board approves projects with recommendations from urban forums at the local or municipal levels. And in both, the CUF aims to improve access to basic social and physical infrastructure needed for social cohesion, economic productivity, and environmental health.

In Liberia, the CUF operates under a three-prong governance structure established to ensure accountability, transparency, safeguards, and sustainability of the projects: the CUF Board, Technical Working Group, and the settlement-level forums. In Uganda, on the other hand, governance is mainly through two structures: the Board and the MDF.

The CUF Board in Liberia is highly centralized; the Deputy Minister for Urban Affairs serves as the chair, with mayors and other high-level political leaders as members. Thus, key decisions are made at a high level. Uganda has embraced a decentralized system of government, and CUF Board membership is determined by local leadership at the municipal or ward level. This aspect means communities and end-users of the CUF projects have more influence on the process.

The schedule of meetings also differs between the countries. The Liberian CUF Board meets at a minimum every six months, while meetings in Uganda are more flexible



*“The CDD projects funded through CUF greatly improved social cohesion, collective responsibility, project ownership, project facility management skills and sustainability among direct beneficiaries made of a rich gender and demographic mix. CUF is no doubt one of the most effective enablers for resilient communities with better options for social and economic transformation of the urban poor.”*

– **Draecabo Trinity Ceaser,**  
President Arua City Development Forum,  
private sector representative

and often more frequent. The CUF Board in Liberia has an institutionalized Technical Working Group of 13 members chaired by the Cities Alliance Infrastructure Project Manager, who provides technical coordination with stipulated Terms of Reference. The Technical Working Group Members are expected to leverage their experiences, expertise, and commitment to build professionalism and provide technical representation in support of the CUF project. In Uganda, the Technical Officers in the municipality are the ones who provide the technical services to the community, such as engineering designs, bills of quantities, and technical supervision to ascertain compliance to quality standards.

# REFLECTIONS

**Based on the experiences in both countries, it is clear that both the MDF and the CUF can play a role in transforming living conditions in secondary cities. The MDF provides an opportunity for multi-stakeholder involvement in decision making, planning, development, and budgeting in the cities. The fora empower urban communities to identify their priorities for funding from the CUF.**

The CUF has been instrumental in financing small community infrastructure that has helped urban poor communities obtain improved access to basic services. For the CUF to be sustainable and contribute to an agenda of transformation, it needs to mobilize more funds from local sources. For both the CUF and the MDF, ongoing functionality requires political will of municipal leaders at all levels.

It is evident that the MDF and CUF have empowered stakeholders and given confidence to the urban poor, who are usually excluded from the formal engagements and regarded as beneficiaries rather than partners. For effective participation, however, it is imperative that the urban poor are effectively organized, mobilized, and sensitized to increase their awareness of their rights, responsibilities, and obligations. Urban poor organizations such as slum dweller federations or associations are critical to empowering the poor for effective dialogue in both the settlement-level forum and the MDF. Institutionalizing the urban forum would go a long way in enhancing their contribution and impact on municipal governance. These organizations complement the municipal administrative structures, which tend to be politically influenced.

There is also a need to ensure the CUF is sustainable by mainstreaming it into the municipal processes of participatory planning, budgeting, monitoring, and reporting. Adopting community contracting procedures, especially for small community infrastructure projects, enhances value for money and ownership of public projects by the communities. Overall, both the MDF and the CUF are important vehicles for sustainable improvement of conditions in urban poor settlements.

The CUF is one of the most successful components of the Cities Alliance Country Programme model. It provides financing for small infrastructure projects selected by the communities themselves, helping residents see tangible progress quickly while the longer-term objectives of the Country Programme unfold.

To date, CUF projects have directly benefitted well over one million individuals. Indirect results, through the direct leveraging of infrastructure investments, have greatly scaled these results. As an illustration, US \$10.8 million of Cities Alliance investments across four Country Programmes leveraged US \$600 million in investment. These capital investments were identified and prioritized through the municipal and settlement-level forums established by the Cities Alliance.

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Kakuma, Kenya





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**Cities Alliance**  
UN House, Boulevard du Regent 37  
1000 Brussels, Belgium

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