Enhancing Monitoring and Evaluation in the Cities Alliance

1. Background

Responding to the recommendations of the external evaluation of the Cities Alliance and correspondent requests by the Consultative Group, the secretariat elaborated a conceptual framework to enhance monitoring and evaluation of the Alliance's efforts. The framework was presented and discussed by the Executive Committee in April 2008. Its basic outline can be summarized as presented below.

Monitoring and evaluation (M+E) supports accountability. It helps to report fairly and accurately on performance results vis-à-vis mandated roles and plans and ensures work has been conducted in compliance with agreed rules and standards. As such, it is essential for the Cities Alliance, as improving aid effectiveness is one of its primary goals.

However, M+E for the Cities Alliance should go beyond the accountability function and strengthen the "Learning Alliance". It can help in understanding why and to what extent results are achieved, and how they impact on stakeholders. This in-depth comprehension of the urban dynamics will also help to identify knowledge, action and policy gaps and as such create evidence for knowledge sharing and advocacy. Hence, rather than being purely an instrument of control, M+E in the Cities Alliance will be applied as the fundamental tool for knowledge sharing and organizational learning.

An effective M+E can also considerably strengthen results based management, improving the design and performance of ongoing projects, of the project portfolio and of the institutional performance.
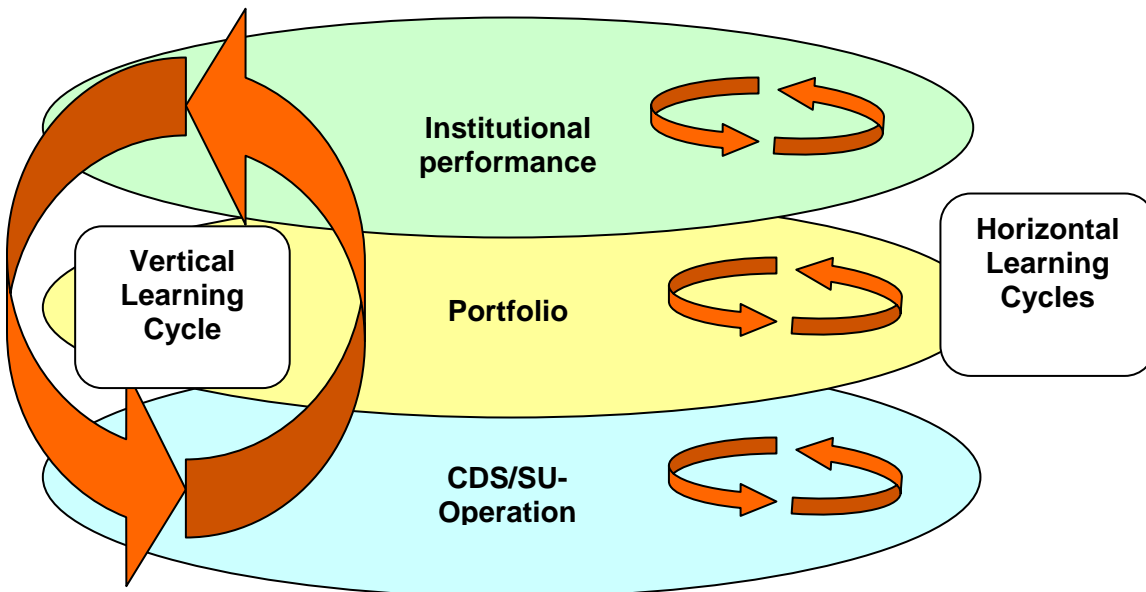
Given that the Cities Alliance is a heterogeneous network of cities and their associations, slum dweller associations, national governments, multilateral and bilateral development agencies, the guiding principles for M+E and the corresponding knowledge sharing and learning would be:

- **Efficiency**: The focus is on what is relevant for decision making by members and partners under real life conditions. The effort and cost for enhanced M+E must be justified by better results.
- **Realism**: Instruments and work processes of M+E will have to be flexible and adjust to a wide range of needs and situations, as motivations and technical capacities vary greatly among members and partners.
- **Subsidiary**: The Cities Alliance secretariat has a complementary and facilitating role. It would engage only in activities where it has a comparative advantage over the actions of individual CA members or partners.

2. Levels of M+E

2. 1 Monitoring and evaluation of individual CDS and SU operations

M+E at project level is designed as a learning tool for effective steering of projects by partner cities and sponsors towards the desired results. It will provoke a deeper understanding of *how* projects work and *what results* they achieve, and by doing so, generate lessons worth sharing with other cities. The outputs of projects (e.g. studies or strategies) as well as the lessons learnt will be easily accessible through the newly established project database on the CA web site.

The secretariat proposes a set of new tools, which include revised formats for the project application, threshold screening as well as progress and completion reports. In addition, three specific M+E tools are suggested to better capture project results. A midterm review would help to keep projects on track towards achieving its objectives. An evaluation workshop at project completion focuses at outputs and outcomes. Both, midterm review and completion workshop would be conducted by the respective project teams. The impacts of projects would be analyzed 2-3 years after the completion of CA funding in an ex-post field evaluation. All above mentioned formats are posted on the members' web page for comments (www.citiesalliance.org).

In most cases, substantial support from sponsoring partners will be necessary to apply effective M+E in CDS/SU projects. Given the support of sponsors it is expected that the enhanced monitoring of CA projects will motivate cities to engage with M+E activities on urban development beyond the scope and lifetime of the CA projects.

2.2 Portfolio review as part of the M+E system

The portfolio review analysis provides concise information on the composition and quality of the portfolio, thus
  (1) accounting for the use of funds by reporting on the composition of the portfolio in terms of regional distribution of projects, partnerships, recipient types, among others;
  (2) Providing an evidence base for strategic management of the CA by analyzing the quality of the portfolio in terms of inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the projects as well as their contribution to overall Cities Alliance objectives.
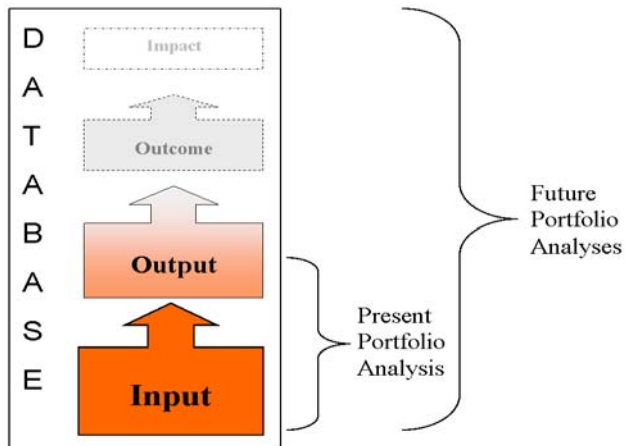
The report of the portfolio review 2008, (Portfolio Review FY00-08) as the first of its kind focuses on the composition of the CDS/SU project portfolio. It is based on project data available at the input and, to a lesser degree, the output level in the newly established database. Once the proposed M+E system for projects is fully operational, it will provide project data on the quality of project outputs and outcomes for future portfolio analyses.

The knowledge generated by individual projects and synthesized through their M+E systems is at the core for learning at the portfolio level beyond individual projects. Projects with similar approaches could be clustered to form "communities of practice". Members could conduct programmatic evaluations across the portfolio on prioritized thematic issues. They could also engage in joint work programs to address knowledge and policy gaps identified by the portfolio analysis. This use of M+E at the portfolio level would require specific budgets. It might also require members' consent on the desirable composition and quality of the portfolio with respective consequences for the selection of project proposals.

2.3 M+E of the institutional performance of the Cities Alliance

The Cities Alliance Charter defines the overall objectives to which the Alliance contributes. The Medium Term Strategy 2008-2010 defines additional objectives at a more operational level. The secretariat proposes an institutional results framework for the ongoing M+E of the work of the Alliance (see Annex I). The results framework follows the logic of impact chains, as presented in the graph above. The framework describes the approach and the intended outputs, outcomes and impacts for each of the main components of the CA (project support, knowledge sharing and learning, advocacy, and partnerships).

The proposed results framework also suggests pragmatic ways to report on progress, balancing the effort for obtaining the monitoring data with the benefit for correspondent decision making. After adopting the results framework by the CG, a monitoring report would be prepared by the secretariat and presented to future CG meetings on an annual basis for evaluation. Following the analysis, members could agree on measures to improve the performance of the Cities Alliance as a whole.

M+E based on the results framework would also support the independent evaluations of the Cities Alliance that are undertaken every three years.

3 Requests to the Consultative Group

The secretariat requests the Consultative Group to analyze the proposal for enhancing M+E in the Cities Alliance, and
1. Approve the overall approach and the three levels of M+E,
2. Mandate that the secretariat undertake M+E implementation, and,
by February 28, 2009,
3. Provide comments and recommendations referring to the M+E formats at project level (see www.citiesalliance.org)'
4. Suggest CDS and SU projects for field testing the proposed M+E instruments, with the support of their corresponding sponsors,
5. Provide comments, recommendations and requests for additional information about the portfolio review (Portfolio Review FY00-08) for the current review or future reports,
6. To provide comments, recommendations and requests for additional information, not yet considered in the results framework (see Annex I).

The secretariat will react to the abovementioned contributions, take the necessary actions for implementation and report on progress to the Executive Committee in 2009.

ANNEX I
Results framework for the institutional performance of the Cities Alliance – "Cities without Slums"

The results framework specifies the objectives of the Charter and the Medium Term Strategy. Monitoring will draw on data generated through the M+E of individual projects supported by the CA, on information and assessments provided by partners and CA members, and on complementary external sources. In many cases, a qualitative approach to reporting is suggested, as systematic data collection on hard indicators would require considerable time, human and financial resources. The qualitative reporting by the secretariat, as suggested below, will provide substantial information for assessing the achievements of CA work and for results-oriented management at the strategic and portfolio level. It would be done through the annual report and through additional reports to the CG.

It is suggested to read the overall development goal and the overall benefit of CA services first, and then follow the vertical sequence of inputs, activities, services/outputs, and use of outputs.

Overall development goal	**To substantially improve the living conditions of 100 million slum dwellers** *Note: This goal guides the work of the Cities Alliance. The Cities Alliance can only contribute to this goal, but not achieve it by itself. Progress on this goal depends on many factors the CA can not influence, e.g. overall economic development, social policies in a specific country, political stability, natural disasters, etc.* CA should **not report** on this goal as part of its institutional M+E, rather UN Habitat should do so as part if it's monitoring of global urban trends and the MDGs.
Overall benefit of Cities Alliance' services **"Outcome"**	**An increasing number of national and local governments improve their regulatory and governance frameworks, policies, and their implementation strategies for pro-poor urban development and slum upgrading** *Note: This goal expresses the effect of the goal of the Medium Term Strategy "The Cities Alliance increases its contribution to systemic change, and to scale."* *Emphasis will be on the improvements which can plausibly be related to CA support. Such improvements will have to be assessed on a case by case basis, considering e.g. policy papers of national governments with explicit reference to urban poverty, urban issues in a PRSP or 5 year plans; the housing policy in Colombia, budget allocations, assessments by CA members. Pro poor urban development includes the prevention of new slums.* **Reporting** would be a qualitative assessment of those cases where substantial progress can be objectively stated and plausibly related to CA support, backed by data, where available. This reporting will not be a monitoring of an indicator in the strict sense, but will provide substantial information to CA members and the general public on the impacts of CA support, adequate for strategic management of the CA.

Area of CA support	Support of CDS and SU projects	Knowledge sharing and learning	Policy dialogue and advocacy	Partnerships
How will CA partners use its services and to what effect? **"Use of outputs"**	**CA- Partners elaborate impact oriented frameworks and strategies for pro-poor urban development and slum-upgrading, introduce institutional innovations and improve their financing capacity** *Note: "partners" can be national or local governments and their associations, NGOs or other development partners.*	**The urban community on policy and practitioners level, and in the academia, discusses, promotes and incorporates Cities Alliance' approaches and experiences in their work routines** *Note: "urban community" refers to universities, think tanks, training organizations, NGOs, ministries, local governments, etc. worldwide, beyond CA-supported projects. "Work routines" refers to ongoing practices over time.*	**Senior level policy makers at local, national and international levels incorporate integrated pro-poor urban development and slum upgrading approaches in their development agendas** *Note: "development agenda" refers to political statements, platforms and programs in the early stages of the policy process, before becoming an official policy.*	**Urban development partners agree and act on consensuated principles and complementary policies and actions, on local, national or global level** *Note: "Urban development partners" include CA members, international and national, public and private agencies and institutions, civil society organizations. "Policies" include donor policies, country assistance papers for urban development frameworks, city development strategies, and other agreements.*
	Reporting will be based on the M+E of individual projects, which will be synthesized at the portfolio level by the secretariat	**Reporting** by the secretariat will synthesize information about requests to the CA for knowledge, considering, use of the project database, downloads from CA website, training courses using CA materials, qualified references to Cities Alliance' experiences in non-CA events, publications, websites, case studies brought to knowledge of the CA, generated by CA partner cities and non-CA cities, etc.	**Reporting** by the secretariat will synthesize qualitative country and city related information, drawing on media reports, high-level events, political declarations, assessments by CA members, etc.	**Reporting** by the secretariat will synthesize qualitative, country and city related information, considering formal agreements, evidence of coordinated actions, assessments by CA members, etc.

Results framework CA Draft 19.12.2008

Area of CA support	Support of CDS and SU projects	Knowledge sharing and learning	Policy dialogues and advocacy	Partnerships
Services provided by the Cities Alliance (by CA members and the secretariat) **"Outputs"**	**Support for projects targeting pro-poor urban development policies and strategies, and upgrading of slums** *Note: "Support" comprises funding, advice, political backing, and convening power, aiming at technical solutions (e.g. land regulation), participatory processes (e.g. steering of complex consensus building processes) and their institutionalization (i.e. integration into municipal budgeting and financing).*	**Provision of easy access to experience-based knowledge and learning opportunities on pro-poor urban development and slum upgrading** *Note: The focus is on practical, "how to do" knowledge, based on, but not limited to, experience generated through CA supported projects, accessible to the public through print and electronic media and other sources as mentioned below.*	**Support for policy dialogues and advocacy for pro-poor urban development and slum upgrading** *Note: "Support" comprises funding, advice, political backing, and convening power. It focuses on advocacy products (key messages and related background information) aiming at decision makers (i.e. mayors, ministers, law makers), and opinion leaders. According to the specific purpose, audiences at local, national and international levels can be addressed. CA also gives advice on effective advocacy means (e.g. organization of events). Advocacy products ("what to do") and knowledge products ("how to do it") complement each other.*	**Support of partnerships for** - **the formulation and implementation of policies and strategies for pro-poor urban development and slum upgrading,** - **knowledge sharing and learning,** - **policy dialogues and advocacy** *Note: "Support" comprises funding, advice, political backing, and convening power, for the establishment or maintenance of partnerships which aim at the coherence and complementarity of efforts among CA members, and of CA members with other partners at local, national and international levels.*
	Reporting by the secretariat will be qualitative and quantitative information on the composition of the project portfolio (geographical distribution, type of partner city, thematic focus of project, funding, rating of CA's services by partner cities).	**Reporting** by the secretariat will synthesize qualitative and quantitative information referring to technical publications, newsletters, web content, availability of project outputs in the secretariat's project database, learning events and courses supported by CA.	**Reporting** by the secretariat will synthesize qualitative and quantitative information on advocacy products (annual report, press releases, other), policy dialogues supported by CA, rating of CA services by partners.	**Reporting** by the secretariat will synthesize qualitative and quantities information on the kind of support given to these partnerships.

Area of CA support	Support of CDS and SU projects	Knowledge sharing and learning	Policy dialogues and advocacy	Partnerships
Activities undertaken by CA members and Secretariat to provide the services described above	• support application processes, • evaluate project proposals and provide advice for revision, • formalize cooperation between CA and partners, • disburse grants for the CDS/SU process and specified deliverables, • provide, on request by partners, technical, managerial, organizational, policy, legal and financial advice to professional staff, partner city stakeholders, and political decision makers, • facilitate stakeholder cooperation (communication, convening and coordination) and consensus building, • support partners' monitoring and evaluations of operations.	• analyze and systematize information from CA operations (proposals and projects) to identify, select and disseminate operational practices and lessons learned, • design and maintain activities for knowledge exchange and learning among members and secretariat, link with existing activities and tools, such as publications and websites, • share identified knowledge gaps with CA members and develop joint knowledge products to address the gaps, • establish contacts, convene practitioners, provide platforms and facilitate participation in knowledge exchange and learning acitivities, • develop and support peer network mechanisms (city to city), facilitate staff exchange among partner cities, • provide information to specific requests from inside and outside CA through a CA "helpdesk".	• identify key messages based on portfolio evidence, • prepare background information for political discussion and statements, • establish contacts, approach key political partners, provide platforms for political opinion building and interchange at the country level and beyond (i.e. panels, conferences, forums, publications), • support coordination of messages, people and events to create critical mass.	• establish and sustain good communication flows among members and partners, • elaborate and suggest common definitions and concepts, • establish joint working groups on specific products or themes, • sustain contacts, convene CA members, provide platforms for opinion building and exchange (panels, conferences, forums, publications), • promote and sustain harmonized member support to operations in partner cities, • realize joint evaluations of operations and of institutional performance.
Inputs	• Grants, • Human resources for technical advice by CA members and secretariat, formal procedures and administration.	• Financial support for partners (as earmarked parts of grants) for learning and exchange, • Financing for specific learning events and knowledge products, • Human resources for provision of information, realization of events, data base, etc.	• Financial support for partners (as earmarked parts of grants) for discussions and interchange on political level, • Financing for advocacy products and annual report, • Human resources for provision of information, preparation and realization of events.	• Financing for events (logistics), • Human resources for provision of information, preparation and realization of events.

Results framework CA Draft 19.12.2008