



# PLACING CITIES AT THE CENTRE OF THE GLOBAL AGENDAS:

Cities Alliance's Contribution  
to the SDGs

**Cities Alliance**

Cities Without Slums

# A NEW RECOGNITION FOR CITIES

The years 2015-2016 were unprecedented for the acknowledgment of cities and urban sustainability as a driver for human development. Almost all global agreements finalised during these years recognised the relevance of local actors, especially the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With 17 Goals and 169 targets, the 2030 Agenda is the most visionary, providing a clear framework for

tackling the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development.

As the global partnership for urban poverty reduction and the promotion of the role of cities in sustainable development, Cities Alliance is well positioned to help move the agenda forward. The partnership supported the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) from the

very beginning; the first action of the newly created Cities Alliance in 1999 was to establish the Cities Without Slums Action Plan, which contributed to the first global target to focus on urban poverty (MDG Target 11).

During the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs, Cities Alliance was part of the successful global advocacy movement to include a standalone goal for cities (SDG11) in the 2030 Agenda. The campaign also called for

the urban dimension to be anchored as a cross-cutting issue in other goals, such as poverty eradication, gender equality and women's empowerment, reducing inequality, climate action, and promoting equitable economic growth.

The following brochure provides a snapshot on how Cities Alliance contributes to the implementation of the SDGs through its Global and Country Programmes.

**17** GOALS  
**169** TARGETS





## A FOCUS ON SECONDARY CITIES

The success of the global agendas will rely substantially on the capacities of secondary cities, where the bulk of the urban transformation is taking place. As such, Cities Alliance's primary focus is on the reduction of urban poverty in the small and medium-sized cities that are instrumental to economic and social progress in almost all countries.

## A CLEAR STRATEGY FOR SUPPORT

In its current Strategic Plan (2018-21), Cities Alliance strongly supports ten SDGs and 55 targets. The plan culminates with a clear commitment: to improve the lives of 20 million of the world's urban poor and empower women in more than 60 cities across seven or more countries by 2021 as part of global efforts to implement the SDGs.

Informal settlements are where much of the challenge to meet the global agreements' goals and commitments is concentrated, and the leave-no-one-behind principle will be tested. To achieve this, Cities Alliance concentrates its interventions around three key enablers for cities to drive their own development:

1. **Governance:** Cities with clearly defined autonomy, authorities and resources;
2. **Markets:** Functioning, transparent and efficient land markets, as well as the integration of informal structures into the city economy; and
3. **Rights:** Promoting respect for human rights and citizenship, especially for those living in informality.



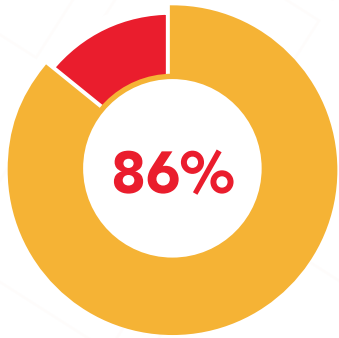
## HOW CITIES ALLIANCE WORKS

Cities Alliance works through Global Programmes and Country Programmes. All of our in-country operations embody the principle of inclusive partnership highlighted in the global agendas. Cities Alliance Country Programmes are longer-term programmes tailored to the country's context and needs, delivered through financing a series of key urban sustainability initiatives in a coherent, sustained manner.

The Country Programmes are guided by our Global Programmes on equitable economic growth, migration, resilience and gender, which generate new knowledge and promote analytical and collaborative approaches to tackle key policy challenges. Moreover, the Global Programmes include our Innovation Fund, which makes grants to pilot new approaches and reach communities left behind. Cities Alliance has a dedicated Global Programme on the global agendas, which showcases effective ways to integrate agendas at the national and local level to promote an integrated approach towards sustainable, equitable cities.

**How Cities Alliance contributes to the SDGs ...**

# 1 NO POVERTY



CONTRIBUTING  
TO **86%** OF  
**SDG 1** TARGETS

6 OF 7 TARGETS:



1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 1.A, 1.B

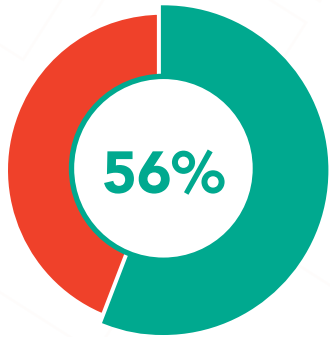
Urban poverty has always been at the heart of the mission of the Cities Alliance, which is emphasised by the Cities Without Slums tagline. The ultimate beneficiaries of Cities Alliance activities are the urban poor, in particular women, and urban poverty reduction is reflected at all levels of our in-country work.

At the **national level**, we work with relevant ministries and units to develop national urban frameworks that focus on poverty eradication to ensure policy coherence and promote private investments.

At the **city level**, we build the capacities of municipal staff and support cities to design pro-poor, long-term and gender-sensitive urban strategies, policies and plans.

At the **community level**, the bulk of our work takes place in informal settlements. Through Community Upgrading Funds, we enable slum dwellers to engage with local authorities and in the planning and development of their neighbourhoods. Know Your City – a Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) campaign that Cities Alliance supports – empowers slum dwellers to collect data about their own settlements and use it to advocate and negotiate for improved services. It has also triggered a discussion on local-level data as an alternative data source and reporting tool.

# 5 GENDER EQUALITY



CONTRIBUTING  
TO **56%** OF  
**SDG 5** TARGETS

5 OF 9 TARGETS:



5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.A

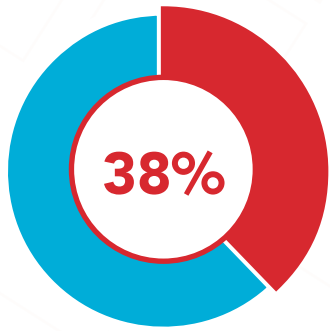
The promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment is central to all Cities Alliance activities. We use a Gender Action Plan to track and monitor gender mainstreaming from our internal processes and policies to the design and outcomes of our programmes. All project proposals are required to demonstrate their contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment.

At the **country** and **city levels**, our technical assistance since 2016 has incorporated gender into local and national development planning. We ensure that women's participation in decision-making processes is included in all our projects, and we support inclusive service delivery and gender-responsive policy making.

Our **Innovation Fund** has a tradition of supporting projects that take novel approaches to empowering women and girls at the community level. For example, Safetipin is a mobile app that collects crowdsourced data on public spaces, and Oxfam's City Works project aims to end exploitation of female domestic workers in Bangladesh and to advocate for their rights.

At the **global level**, we use research, knowledge and advocacy to actively promote the link between gender equality and development and disrupt gender-neutral policies. In 2017, we published a study that provides guidance for local governments on gender-responsive public services. And during the Habitat III process in 2016, we analysed the Zero Draft of the New Urban Agenda through a gender lens in collaboration with the Huairou Commission.

# 6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



CONTRIBUTING  
TO 38% OF  
**SDG 6** TARGETS

3 OF 8 TARGETS:



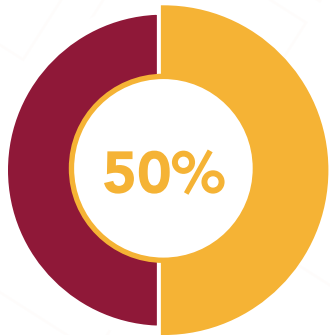
6.1, 6.2, 6.B

Infrastructural development and investments in essential public services, such as water and sanitation, can generate inclusive economic growth and increased productivity.

We support slum dwellers in ensuring that the necessary infrastructure is put in place for them to access safe, affordable drinking water and basic sanitation. In this regard, the Cities Alliance seeks to mobilise private local capital to close public infrastructure gaps, mainly in Africa.

Citizen participation is ensured and fostered by our community driven fund mechanism. Through projects such as our **Community Upgrading Funds** in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Liberia, Uganda and Vietnam, citizens are building public toilets and water points in their settlements. In India, one of our **Innovation Fund** projects implemented by the Stockholm Environment Institute has pioneered groundwater mapping and analysis to improve water resource management in Bangalore.

# 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



CONTRIBUTING  
TO **50%** OF  
**SDG 8** TARGETS

**6** OF **12** TARGETS:



8.1, 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8

Equitable economic growth is one of the Cities Alliance's core themes and critical to our work at the country and global levels. We have a dedicated Global Programme which identifies and facilitates knowledge and concrete interventions in support of more equitable economic growth in cities.

Its work has included producing a toolkit and advocacy materials for local governments and informal workers to ensure that urban public spaces are inclusive and supportive of informal livelihoods, as well as an exploration of gender-responsive services as a pathway to more equitable economic development.

We also developed a toolkit for local government to assess how improved access to key public goods and services can support more equitable growth trajectories in their cities. Our Global Programme on Cities and Migration aims to enable cities to facilitate equitable social and economic inclusion of labour migrants, with a particular focus on SDG 8.8 to "protect labour rights and promote a safe working environment for all".

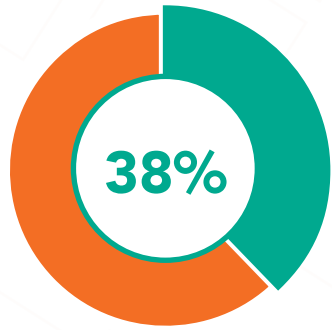
Through our work with the urban poor at the **community level**, we emphasise the importance of integrating both formal and informal businesses into the city economy. For example:

- In Liberia, we are strengthening the organisation and participation of street and market vendors in city governance and inclusive planning.
- We are working in eight cities in Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya and Uganda to promote equitable access to public goods and services as an avenue towards economic development, based on local needs, capacities and priorities.

Our **Innovation Fund** has a tradition of supporting projects that promote decent work conditions and employment. In Bangladesh, Chad, Guatemala, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone we funded projects that work on labour market integration and are advocating for the working rights of vulnerable groups such as youth, migrants and domestic workers.



# 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



CONTRIBUTING TO **38%** OF **SDG 9** TARGETS

**3 OF 8** TARGETS:



9.1, 9.3, 9 A

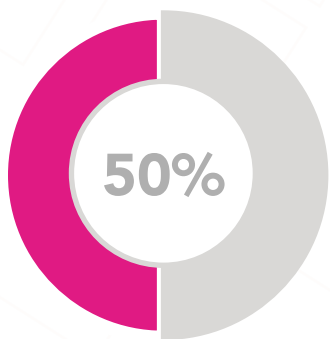
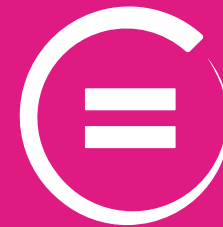
Well-designed policies and strategies for urban development are our entry point to building resilient infrastructure and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialisation. In our country work, we ensure that sustainable infrastructure is planned in a participatory and pro-poor manner at the national, city and community levels.

A key pillar of the Cities Alliance is to leverage funds by in-country technical assistance and diagnostic activities for follow-up infrastructure investments. This entails, for example investments in water supply networks, rehabilitation/ construction of treatment facilities as well as

investment in urban infrastructure (roads, waste management, local economic infrastructure and urban mobility).

We also support civil society networks through our Country Programmes and Global Programmes. In Liberia, we are currently strengthening the organisation and participation of street and market vendors in city governance and inclusive planning through a grant to Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO). In addition, slum dwellers are building water points, public toilets, community meeting halls and classrooms with the support of our community upgrading projects.

# 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



CONTRIBUTING  
TO **50%** OF  
SDG 10 TARGETS

**5 OF 10** TARGETS:



10.1, 10.2, 10.3, 10.7, 10.B

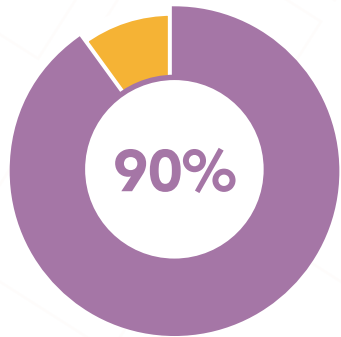
Globally, inequalities are growing in different regions both within, and between, cities. Cities Alliance promotes the social, economic and political inclusion of slum dwellers, while paying attention to the needs of other minority or vulnerable groups, such as women or migrants.

Migration is a core theme of the Cities Alliance. Through the **Global Programme: Cities and Migration**, Cities Alliance supports partner cities, local governments, and communities to respond to, manage, and capitalise on the opportunities and contributions arising from migration.

Cities Alliance partner cities will be strengthened in inclusive local migration governance and to proactively plan for refugees and internally displaced persons within urban spaces.

Our **Innovation Fund** has supported innovative projects that increase spatial, social and economic integration of migrants. For example, in South Africa, a project is building on community theatre and storytelling to overcome xenophobia. In Guatemala, an inter-agency committee was created to better coordinate support on the labour market integration of returnees.

# 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



CONTRIBUTING  
TO **90%** OF  
**SDG 11** TARGETS

**9 OF 10** TARGETS:



11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.4, 11.5, 11.6, 11.7,  
11.A, 11.B

SDG11 goes to the very heart Cities Alliance's mission: to improve the lives of urban populations by delivering innovative, citywide and integrated solutions to urban poverty in cities where it matters the most. Thus, our work contributes to virtually all of the targets for this goal.

At the **global level**, we intervene with strategic activities to build sustainable cities and communities, and we promote new analytical and collaborative approaches to tackle key policy issues. Our Global Programmes, which are driven by members and facilitated by the Cities Alliance Secretariat, serve as a coordination platform, knowledge hub, and think tank to advocate new thinking on emerging topics including migration, resilience, gender and equitable economic growth.

A key tool is the development of **National Urban Policies** (NUPs) to ensure a coordinated approach to urbanisation. The Cities Alliance is part of a tripartite initiative of UN-Habitat and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to support the development and implementation of NUPs.

In addition, we harvest other strategic opportunities to promote the role of cities in sustainable development, such as global conferences (for instance, Africities, the World Urban Forum, and the UN Climate Change Conference of Parties).

At the **country level**, our longer-term programmes are tailored to a country's context and needs, delivered through financing a series of key urban initiatives in a coherent, sustained manner to achieve development impact at scale. Key tools include working with the national government to develop National Urban Policies as a coordinated approach to urbanisation, developing city development strategies for municipalities to reap the opportunities arising from urbanisation, and working with the local communities on participatory and pro-poor slum upgrading. Our work has reached from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mozambique, Tunisia, Uganda to Vietnam.

# 13 CLIMATE ACTION



CONTRIBUTING  
TO 100% OF  
SDG 13 TARGETS

5 OF 5 TARGETS:



13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 13.A, 13.B

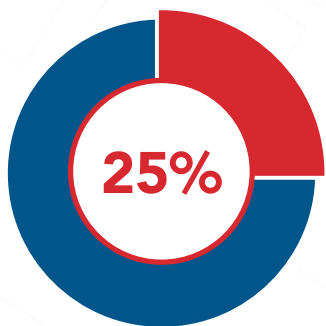
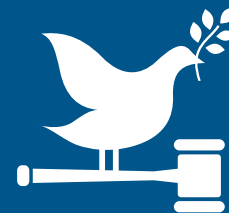
Our Global Programme on Resilient Cities brings together a diverse membership which supports the practical application of global knowledge to climate change responses in cities. We build knowledge and capacity on climate change and integrate responsive measures into policies and planning.

Throughout, we ensure a focus on the urban poor, informality, and secondary cities – the people and spheres most affected by climate change, but which often lack the capacity to respond. For instance, in collaboration with the World Research Institute (WRI), we assessed climate resilience at the community level and improved the preparedness of urban poor communities. Building on our insights from the ground, we developed a toolkit with C40 on climate action planning for local governments.

This knowledge informs and guides our in-country work. In our **Liberia Country Programme**, we are implementing two projects on urban waste management to help Greater Monrovia become more resilient and sustainable.

Based on our analytical and operational work, we believe there needs to be stronger collaboration between practitioners and academia, especially when it comes to climate action. In 2018, we co-organised the **Cities IPCC conference**, in Edmonton, which brought together scientists and urban practitioners for the first time to discuss the cities and climate change interface.

# 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



CONTRIBUTING  
TO 25% OF  
**SDG 16** TARGETS

3 OF 12 TARGETS:



16.6, 16.7, 16.8

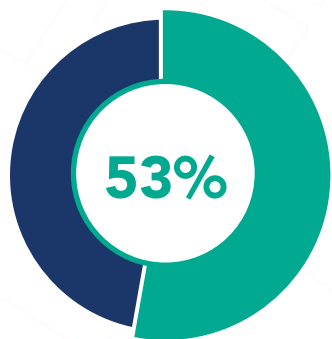
In many ways, Goal 16 is the essential platform for underwriting the success of the 2030 Agenda. Cities Alliance believes in the development of effective, accountable and transparent institutions as a key enabler for sustainable development.

At the **national level**, we are supporting the development and building the capacities of technical units working on urban development. At the **city level**, we support local governments in more effective urban planning and inclusive service delivery. We have developed a range of toolkits, including city development strategies, human resources benchmarking, data management and equitable economic growth to guide the municipality's work.

Throughout, we ensure that all decision-making processes are participatory and include the voices and needs of all inhabitants. We have a tradition of working together with SDI to empower residents of informal settlements to engage with their city representatives and be involved in planning processes.

Our belief in strong institutions is also reflected in our normative work at the **global level**. Together with UCLG, we produce the City Enabling Environment rating reports, which assess and rate country performance in providing the necessary legal, fiscal and political framework for local and regional governments in African and Asian countries.

# 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



CONTRIBUTING TO **53%** OF **SDG 17** TARGETS

10 OF 19 TARGETS:



17.1, 17.3, 17.6, 17.9, 17.14, 17.15, 17.16, 17.18, 17.9

Multi-stakeholder platforms such as Cities Alliance are an essential part of the infrastructure needed to achieve the scale of collaboration required for delivering the 2030 Agenda. As the preeminent global partnership supporting cities to deliver sustainable development, the Cities Alliance builds on the knowledge and experiences of its more than 30 members with nearly 20 years of partnership development. Using our United Nations Multi-Donor Fund, we channel technical assistance and grants to local and national actors to deliver policies and programmes that directly address urban poverty and gender inequality in cities.

The Cities Alliance partnership convenes the right organisations to work on specific development themes. Within our **Global Programmes**, we coordinate the advocacy and analytical efforts of our members on emerging

topics such as migration, resilience, gender and equitable economic growth – ensuring coherence of efforts and avoiding replication of work. Our Global Programme dedicated to the global agendas deepened the understanding of how to implement them in and with cities, and it enables exchange and better coordination.

The partnership approach is essential to our **operational activities in countries**, where we work together with local government, national government and civil society. We understand that the 2030 Agenda can only be successfully implemented with effective collaboration between public, private, academic and civil actors.



## ABOUT THE CITIES ALLIANCE

The Cities Alliance is a global partnership for urban poverty reduction, promoting the role of cities in sustainable development. We bring together organisations with different perspectives and expertise on city issues around common goals: well run, productive cities that provide opportunities for all residents. The Cities Alliance Secretariat is based in Brussels and maintains a regional and country presence. The Cities Alliance is part of the United Nations System, as hosted by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

[www.citiesalliance.org](http://www.citiesalliance.org)



# Cities Alliance

Cities Without Slums

