

# THE LIBERIA COUNTRY PROGRAMME



## WHAT IS THE LIBERIA COUNTRY PROGRAMME?

The 2014 Ebola outbreak had a devastating impact on Liberia, killing over 4,800 people nationwide. It was also the first time in history the disease hit major urban centres in the country and West Africa more generally. As well as those who lost family members, thousands of people lost their jobs and livelihoods. Almost a quarter of the people in Liberia live in the slums of greater Monrovia. Every single day they face the challenges of living in poor housing, with inadequate water supply, and very little sanitation. It is well established that the conditions in Monrovia's informal settlements help fuel the spread of the disease.

The Cities Alliance global partnership aims to improve the lives of at least 400,000 slum dwellers and working poor by empowering local people and enabling them to create lasting change in their communities in partnership with government and the private sector. The Programme will mobilise urban poor groups and equip them to improve their own lives. Access to community grants will support slum upgrading including improved access to water and sanitation. Investments in city wide slum upgrading and incremental housing policy frameworks will transform the living conditions of urban poor households. The Programme will recognise and support

The [Cities Alliance] programme allows, for the first time, for slum dwellers to be part of the national development process.

*President of Liberia, H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf at the country's first National Urban Forum in June 2015*

the contributions of the informal economy by supporting street vendors in greater Monrovia to negotiate better more decent working conditions with city government. Communities will also be supported to create vibrant local associations so they are better able to demand and achieve long term improvements in their living conditions from local authorities. Finally, the Programme will work with city and national government to improve strategic urban planning frameworks and enhance the national enabling environment for Liberian cities through the country's first National Urban Policy.

The Programme will bring greater Monrovia's slum dwellers - who make up 70 per cent of its population - into the national development process, and help improve living and working conditions for the poor as part of the social and economic recovery from the 2014-15 Ebola Virus Disease outbreak. The Programme will run from 2016-2021.



## WHAT ARE THE PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES?

Initiated at the request of the Monrovia City Corporation (MCC) and the Liberian Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Programme aims to provide direct service investments, especially for the urban poor and youth living in Monrovia's informal settlements. It also supports Liberia's goal of achieving middle income status by 2030.

The Programme aims to improve the quality of support provided to cities in the country, eventually expanding from greater Monrovia to cities and county capitals around the country.

## WHO ARE THE PARTNERS?

The Cities Alliance Programme aims to mobilise a range of partners to support local authorities in greater Monrovia with implementation, including the Liberian Ministry of Internal Affairs, Department of Urban Affairs, organised slum dweller and street vendor groups in cities, and the private sector.

International development partners include United Cities and Local Governments Africa (UCLGA), UN-Habitat, Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), Comic Relief, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), StreetNet International, Habitat for Humanity International and the YMCA.

## WHAT ARE THE FOCUS AREAS?

The three pillars of the Liberia Country Programme are to:

1. Strengthen organisation and meaningful participation of slum dweller and street vendor organisations in city governance, inclusive planning and responsive service delivery.
2. Improve climate-resilient and inclusive urban planning, slum upgrading and incremental housing strategies by investing in community-driven services and affordable housing.
3. Enhance the national enabling environment for resilient and inclusive urbanisation that benefits economic growth, local governments, and the urban poor.

## URBAN LIBERIA

**Population:** Out of a total population of approximately 4.4 million (2014), more than half of all Liberians – some 2.1 million – live in cities, which are growing at a rate of 4.7% a year.

**Monrovia as the national economic driver:** The total national GDP for Liberia in 2014 was USD 2.027 billion (2014), with two thirds generated by greater Monrovia.

**Most growth is in greater Monrovia:** Over 40% of Liberia’s urban residents live in greater Monrovia, whose population is growing at over 7% – meaning the city will double in roughly ten years. Approximately 70% of people in the metro area live in slums.

**Lack of basic services:** In Monrovia and other secondary cities in Liberia, ineffective land use and infrastructure planning means that more than half of urban residents lack access to basic urban services.

**Urban governance:** Greater Monrovia comprises 12 different local government authorities that include two cities, nine townships and one borough. The city has numerous civil society organisations that represent organised groups of slum dwellers, street vendors, market women, and waste pickers.

**Towards a national urban policy:** Liberia’s government has been working on a national urban policy since 2013. In 2015, the first Liberian National Urban Forum was held to bring all stakeholders together to share their points of view and develop a roadmap for the policy in alignment with Habitat III processes.

## RESURGENT MONROVIA POST EBOLA

The capital of Liberia, Monrovia’s opportunities and challenges are significant. It generates two thirds of the national GDP and has a vibrant central business district, bustling informal entrepreneurs, and political leaders that are strongly committed to a successful future for the city.

Monrovia is also struggling to rebuild after a bloody 14-year civil war decimated Liberia’s infrastructure, economy and government institutions. Over 300,000 people died in the war, and one million were displaced – many of them coming to Monrovia, causing extremely rapid growth that has severely stressed the city’s already limited infrastructure and ability to deliver basic services.

In 2014 Monrovia faced one of its toughest challenges yet when the Ebola Virus Disease ravaged the city. It was the worst Ebola outbreak in Liberia’s history; some 4,000 people died of the virus, many of them women due to their traditional role as caregivers.

Struggling to cope with a disaster of this magnitude and with institutions still weak after the war, the national government shifted support for Ebola awareness and prevention to the community level. The Monrovia City Corporation (MCC), in partnership with UNICEF, Paynesville City and 120 communities within Greater Monrovia, led a community-driven initiative to combat the spread of Ebola at the grassroots level.

Through Operation Stop Ebola, community representatives were trained in how to raise awareness of Ebola at the community level. They went door-to-door with materials in hand, explaining the virus and how to take preventative measures. The campaign helped turn the trajectory on new infections, and in May 2015 Liberia was declared Ebola-free by the World Health Organisation.



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## ABOUT CITIES ALLIANCE

Cities Alliance is the global partnership for poverty reduction and promoting the role of cities in sustainable development. Partnerships are critical to achieving the 2030 Agenda for 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.

Our members include multilateral development organisations, national governments, local government associations, international NGOs, private sector and foundations, and academia.

The Cities Alliance Secretariat is based in Brussels, and is hosted by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

## CONNECT WITH US

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