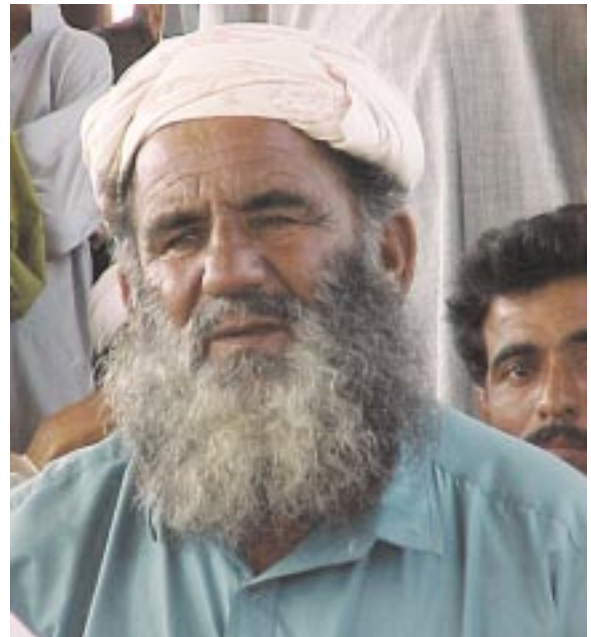# Learning and Knowledge Sharing

From the outset, a principle factor motivating Cities Alliance members to join forces has been their recognition that they have much to learn from each other and that drawing on the collective experience of cities and their development partners will help fill critical knowledge gaps. Supporting this learning process involves analysing and sharing lessons from experience and fostering the use of more effective tools, policy options, and standards of practice.

Learning and knowledge sharing take place as an integral part of the activities the Alliance supports worldwide. Lessons learned are analysed in the evaluation of these activities, as well as by proactively targeting key knowledge gaps. These learning and knowledge-sharing activities are carried out in partnership with national associations of local authorities, urban institutes, and universities in countries where Alliance partners support CDS and citywide upgrading. The Alliance is also increasingly engaging the dissemination capacity of its members and its NGO, CBO, and private sector partners to expand the reach of these activities to urban development practitioners worldwide.

Drawing on the related recommendations of the independent evaluation of the Alliance, the Policy Advisory Board (PAB), and the Consultative Group, the Alliance's 'learning alliance' functions were more clearly structured during the course of this year to strengthen their impact. At its October meeting in Brussels, the Consultative Group endorsed the key elements of the Alliance's Communications and Dissemination Strategy (see next page). In addition, a framework for the evaluation of completed Alliance activities was developed this year to ensure that the lessons learned are systematically extracted from all Alliance activities.

The Alliance's learning agenda is now also sequenced to achieve greater efficiency and synergy with its annual meetings. As is described below, one of our most important learning products this year is the series of case studies – commissioned under the Alliance's Shelter Finance for the Poor Initiative – which has now been published as a new CIVIS series devoted to shelter finance for the poor. The lessons learned from the financial institutions that partnered with Alliance members in this initiative are the areas of focus of the Alliance's Public Policy Forum (PPF) in São Paulo in October 2003, along with issues related to how cities in developing country can more effectively mobilise domestic capital. Sustainable financing strategies for cities, including how cities mobilise domestic capital will, in turn, be the focus of the Alliance's next strategic learning initiative, which will be launched drawing on the results of the PPF.

Peshawar CDS consultation, Pakistan

Communications and Dissemination Strategy

The Cities Alliance seeks to advance the collective know-how of city authorities and their development partners on how to reduce urban poverty and improve the quality and impact of urban development cooperation. Its communications strategy supports a learning process among all its partners and includes sharing lessons and fostering the use of more effective tools, policy options, and standards of practice. The effectiveness of its dissemination strategy depends not only on the quality and appropriateness of the outputs but also on having these outputs reach those who can make use of them in a form that encourages their use.

Learning, dissemination, and communication:
Key principles

- Maintain sharp focus on agreed-upon knowledge gaps;

- Engage learning, dissemination, and communications capacities of Alliance members (associations of local authorities, bilaterals, and multilaterals); and

- Make Alliance information easily accessible, in multiple languages.

The Learning Alliance

- ***The Secretariat is to focus on content,*** ensuring that core knowledge is extracted from the Alliance's work programme by analysing and distilling lessons and best practices, helping to address key knowledge gaps, identifying effective tools, and managing archive databases;

- ***Monitoring and evaluation of results and lessons learned:*** Engage the existing monitoring and evaluation capacities of Alliance members to analyse outcomes and garner lessons, best practices, and tools from CDS and upgrading activities;

- ***Funding to fill knowledge gaps:*** Alliance members can initiate and/or sponsor 'learning' proposals that address knowledge gaps. PAB and the Consultative Group help define critical gaps that need to be filled to support the Alliance's goals, e.g., learning from cities that have sustained impacts on poverty reduction, strategies to prevent the growth of new slums, etc.

Knowledge sharing: Dissemination strategy

- ***Associations of local authorities serve as key 'wholesalers'*** for their members, with support of bilateral and multilateral Alliance members; reaching out through their existing networks;

- ***Alliance members disseminate*** Alliance knowledge outputs within the frameworks of their own existing publications (newsletters, etc.);

- ***Additional dissemination partners,*** with well-developed capacities to reach urban development practitioners worldwide, engage in the preparation, packaging, and dissemination of knowledge products.

Communications strategy

- ***Public Relations:*** Manage the profile of the Alliance as a global partnership and establish and maintain relations with the Alliance's key constituents and clients, including cities, local authority associations, representatives of the urban poor, the private sector, national authorities, and the international development community;

- ***Advocacy to catalyse action:*** Launch a concerted and coordinated effort to mount campaigns for action at global, regional, and/or country level, including the Cities Without Slums Millennium Development Goal;

- ***Systematic engagement with the media:*** Alliance members are to actively reach out to the media with Alliance materials, establishing contacts with local newspapers, radio, and television to cultivate dissemination outlets by developing briefing documents for journalists and providing field-trips for journalists to visit particular projects or programmes.

Learning Alliance in Action in 2003

Shelter Finance for the Urban Poor: Private Sector Innovations

Lack of access to formal sources of credit by hundreds of millions of slum dwellers is one of the most significant obstacles to the reduction of urban poverty, hampering not only the improvement of shelter conditions, but also local economic development.

The Cities Alliance Shelter Finance for the Poor Initiative was designed to respond to both client demand and to the growing capacity of private sector financial institutions. Many of these have experience in serving the urban poor and are now looking to expand their services to include housing loans to poor clients on commercially viable terms and tailored to incremental building processes. Funded jointly with CGAP, the IFC, and USAID, the Alliance launched this initiative in partnership with private financial institutions. The objective was to examine shelter financing through the prism of scale, sustainability, and outreach to the poor to better understand emerging practise and how formal private sector financial institutions, governments, and donors might best support it.

This framework was applied to five case studies: Mibanco in Peru; SEWA Bank in India; FUNHAVI, an NGO in Mexico; a government-supported second-tier finance facility in Ecuador; and a study of the enabling environment for shelter finance in Kenya. A synthesis paper has been produced, identifying policy recommendations on taking shelter finance for the poor to scale.

The findings are being disseminated widely to inform and promote this emerging practise, inspire replication and adaptation, and to help mobilise the medium-term capital required to increase the availability and affordability of shelter finance for the world's poorest households. There is considerable demand for these learning products, and in addition to being made available on the websites of the Alliance and CGAP's Microfinance Gateway, importantly they have also been incorporated into practitioner course materials, including in the Wharton School's Housing Finance programme, the University of Colorado-Boulder's annual microfinance course, and the World Bank Institute's global learning events.

Scaling up Shelter Finance for the Poor: What Role for Governments and Investment Partners?

Recommendations to governments:

- Establish a conducive macroeconomic financial and regulatory framework for housing finance;
- Recognise that poor people build their houses incrementally, and set policies and regulations in accordance;
- Recognise that the poor value access to credit more than its cost;
- Ensure secure tenure; and
- Provide basic infrastructure and social services in poor neighborhoods.

Recommendations to investment partners:

- Work with governments that seek to promote enabling macroeconomic and financial policies and regulatory frameworks that encourage housing finance institutions to serve low-income clients;
- Partner with financial institutions with proven track records, emphasising financial sustainability and portfolio quality as key criteria for selection;
- Provide medium-term capital to financial institutions;
- Provide funds for building institutional capacity, not just for on-lending;
- Avoid conditions on funds that can (inadvertently) reduce the ability to experiment with housing finance; and
- Support applied research and its dissemination.

Source: Cities Alliance Shelter Finance for the Poor Series Synthesis. CIVIS Issue 4v. April 2003.

New Learning Alliance Partnerships

In accordance with the its communications and dissemination strategy, this year the Alliance strengthened its partnerships with the IIED and ISTED, which each have well-developed substantive capacities and mailing lists to reach urban development practitioners worldwide.

IIED, a non-profit policy research institute, publishes an internationally respected journal on urban development, *Environment and Urbanization*, and produces working papers and policy briefs on urban poverty reduction. IIED and the Alliance are

already working together on several joint initiatives related to the Cities Without Slums action plan and MDG Target 11, as well as exploring together how best to share Alliance learning products with the close to 9,000 urban specialists, practitioners, and institutions on IIED's mailing list.

ISTED, a non-profit organisation which also has an extensive network of urban practitioners, supports research, workshops, and seminars and publishes one of the most widely disseminated newsletters, *Villes en Développement*, in French and English. ISTED has already included Alliance material in *Villes en Développement*, and this collaboration is set to expand this coming year to promote the Cities Alliance partnership, share knowledge and experiences from Alliance activities, and improve the availability and dissemination of information and publications connected to the Alliance and its activities. ISTED and the Alliance are also collaborating in preparation for the Cities Alliance session at Africités 2003 (Yaoundé, Cameroon, 2-6 December 2003).

IIED, ISTED, AUDI, the University of São Paulo, and other Alliance partners have been working to make Alliance information more accessible and in multiple languages. A user-friendly guide to the Cities Alliance and its funding application procedures has also been developed by the Secretariat and will support the Alliance's outreach initiatives.

Strengthening CDS Knowledge Base

The Alliance's partnership with AUDI is also expanding. AUDI is becoming a significant partner in Alliance activities in the Middle East and North Africa region, working closely with the World Bank and other partners to facilitate the design and implementation of CDS in the region.

CDS were the focus of an Alliance workshop on poverty reduction hosted by the ADB in Manila, Philippines, in May 2003. The Philippines has had a very active CDS programme and the event, which was attended by a number of mayors and urban development practitioners, provided an opportunity for substantive discussion of CDS experiences and lessons learned.

March 2003 saw the addition of a new network to the Asian City Network (www.infocity.org): CDS Indonesia (www.cdsindonesia.org). Linking Indonesian cities with civil society, the private sector, donors, and other Asian cities, the Indonesian City Network portal, developed with support from the Cities Alliance and the World Bank, was designed not only to serve as a knowledge-sharing platform and to link cities with interested donors and private investors, but to encourage citizen participation in city development and increase transparency, as performance indicators are posted on the website.

The CDS section of the Cities Alliance's website was revamped in FY03 to offer a more comprehensive database of CDS experiences around the world, including Alliance-supported CDS, as well as tools, guidelines, and resources.

Learning exchange in Pune, India

Learning and Knowledge Sharing