Cities Alliance
Cities Without Slums

THE COMMUNITY UPGRADING FUND (CUF) OF THE CITIES ALLIANCE LIBERIA COUNTRY PROGRAMME

The Liberia Country Programme

Emerging from the combined ravages of a brutal civil war and the Ebola virus, the people of Liberia embody the concept of resilience. Despite the burdens of many developmental and other challenges, the Liberia of today is a country with ambition, aiming to achieve middle income status by 2030.

In this context, the Cities Alliance Country Programme is designed to provide long-term programmatic support to help Liberia realise its developmental objectives in a way that benefits the urban poor and reduces both urban poverty and inequality through access to economic and social services.

The Country Programme aims to improve the lives and opportunities of up to 400,000 slum dwellers in Greater Monrovia, with interventions at the community, municipal and national levels. The Community Upgrading Fund is one of the activities at the community level, in addition to profiling and organising.

AT A GLANCE

BENEFICIARY : Slum Communities in Greater Monrovia
ADMINISTERED BY : Cities Alliance
DONOR : Comic Relief International UK
SERVICES : Social and Infrastructure
DURATION : April 2016 – February 2021

The Value of Community-Driven Development

There is growing recognition that successful community-driven interventions support economic vibrancy at the community level, create inclusive city growth, and promote equitable access to public goods and services for all residents. Because such interventions foster a strong sense of ownership, they tend to be more sustainable.

Community-driven interventions also empower citizens and help them negotiate for their rights with local and national government. Activities such as community profiling, verification, and settlement forums help informal settlements become acknowledged as an integral part of the city. In addition, they play a valuable role in contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reducing urban poverty, and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Community Upgrading Fund

The Community Upgrading Fund is a community-driven development initiative that provides financing for small infrastructure projects selected by the communities themselves. The projects enable the urban poor to make a measurable impact on their communities by improving their basic social and physical infrastructure, enhancing their quality of life, and creating a better work environment.

The CUF promotes an institutional arrangement that enables government officials at the national and local level to work together with communities – building social cohesion, economic productivity, and environmental health in the process.

It provides tangible solutions for improving communities and neighbourhoods, through an approach that encourages active participation by residents in the planning, design and implementation of the projects.

The CUF enables longer term plans to be negotiated, integrated and developed for comprehensive urban development.

The CUF projects are selected by the communities, depending on their needs. Examples include the construction of new community-managed environmental health and social infrastructure, such as the provision of water, drainage, sanitation, sewage, waste management, flooding, disaster management (fire), coastal erosion, and security of tenure.

Other infrastructure projects targeted by the CUF include clinics, schools, early learning centres, sidewalks, parks, community halls, sports fields, tree planting, and climate change mitigation initiatives.

Implementation

With the CUF, community members are the ones who decide which projects to undertake, typically at an organised settlement forum informed by data collected through profiling activities. Through this approach, communities strengthen their capacity in community profiling – an important tool that allows communities to obtain evidence-based data they can use for development planning, identifying public services, and improving their neighbourhoods in a way that is inclusive and transparent.

The CUF mechanism allows communities and partners to collaborate in a way that promotes efficient use of donor resources channelled to slums and community upgrading initiatives. It can also serve as an action cycle for building partnerships and mobilising and planning with urban poor communities.

The CUF is viewed as an effective model. It has attracted support and resources from other donors and organisations interested in supporting community infrastructure and scaling-up programmes to improve the lives of the urban poor.

In Liberia, the Cities Alliance CUF is working with residents to build water kiosks and other basic social infrastructure within the Greater Monrovia slum and resettlement community. Projects will improve access to clean water and sanitation in the community, contribute to reducing water-borne diseases, and promote social cohesion and livelihood.

Community Engagement and Sustainability

The community, implementing partners, and municipal authorities work closely together from project design, implementation, handover, operation and maintenance. At each stage, sustainable measures are built in to ensure the best benefit for community use. Operation and maintenance training are provided to community leaders. The projects use renewable energy technologies whenever possible, such as fitting water kiosks with off-grid solar panels to provide light at night and to charge phones. They also seek to integrate increasing energy access in informal settlements into all interventions.

They also find creative ways to build in sustainability. For instance, furniture and counter shelving are installed in water kiosks so that operators can use them as a mini-shop for selling household goods – creating opportunities for livelihood targeted at women and young girls in the communities.

For each CUF project, community members work with relevant agencies to develop management plans with the roles and responsibilities of both community and stakeholders clearly defined. The settlement forums also provide a clear mechanism for handling and communicating complaints. Throughout, communities are empowered to negotiate with the municipal utility supplier for services and build their capacity.

Initial Result

WATER KIOSKS
Popo Beach Community in New Kru Town (Monrovia)

In 1970, Togolese fishermen from the Popo tribe arrived in Liberia and settled along the coast. As the fishing industry grew, so did its coastal population, and the Popo Beach settlement was established in 1976. It now has an estimated:

population of **4,980**

with **820** households

and **342** structures

WATER KIOSKS AND SHOWERS
King Peter Town (Monrovia)

King Peter Town is a settlement community situated on a peninsula between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mesurado River. The community has an estimated:

population of **4,000**

and **321** structures

covering an area of **72** acres

The CUF plans to reach **113** profiled settlement/slum communities, benefiting **400,000** people in Greater Monrovia.

CUF projects build capacity in community upgrading, planning and preparation of management plans, and gender mainstreaming in interventions.

The CUF projects link directly to **SDGs 6** and **11** and overall contribute to the outcomes of 10 SDGs.

Cities Alliance promotes local ownership of projects by involving local authorities and communities to ensure long-term use and maintenance of community infrastructure service builds.

Implementing projects with economic, social and environmental sustainability in mind – that are driven by community priority and participation – helps produce lasting outcomes in the communities where we work and for our partners. It also supports achieving SDG targets by 2030.

Business Opportunity: The Cities Alliance Community Upgrading Fund is an established mechanism that can accomodate additional support from donors. With increased resources, more projects could be implemented and executed to the benefit of the city and the communities. To be involved, get in touch at www.citiesalliance.org

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