

URBAN MEKONG CORRIDOR INITIATIVE

Connecting Rapidly Growing Towns
and Cities for Inclusive Green Development



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United Cities and Local Governments
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Urban Mekong Corridor Initiative (UMCI) is the first dedicated transboundary platform for fostering regional collaboration and investment among Mekong River cities. Launched in 2024, the initiative supports cities along the Mekong River in addressing shared urban challenges, from climate resilience and sustainable economic growth to inclusive governance and equitable service delivery. With rapid urbanisation, economic transformation, and environmental pressures shaping the region, UMCI provides a critical space for peer learning, strategic coordination, and joint action.

UMCI promotes strategic city partnerships to advance solutions in climate resilience, inclusive economic development, and access to public services. Cities engage in pilot projects, technical assistance, and investment mobilisation to test innovative models, including nature-based solutions for water management, circular economy approaches to waste, and economic inclusion strategies for small businesses and local entrepreneurs.

The UMCI hosts biannual Urban Mekong Corridor Dialogues, co-organised by Cities Alliance and UCLG ASPAC. These annual convenings serve as a mechanism to strengthen transboundary cooperation, aligning local urban strategies with regional priorities such as those of ASEAN, the Mekong River Commission, and international development partners. In 2024, the initiative was formally included in the ASEAN Mayors Forum Action Plan 2025, reinforcing its role as a driving force for urban collaboration in the region.

As the UMCI expands, its focus remains on leveraging cities' leadership to drive impactful urban transformation. With support from Cities Alliance, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), UCLG ASPAC, and other development partners, the initiative is fostering a regional network of secondary cities that will inform the future of urban sustainability in the Mekong Corridor. The coming years will be critical for strengthening collaboration, scaling best practices, and mobilising investments that ensure Mekong cities remain livable, resilient, and engines of inclusive growth.



Cities Alliance is pleased to have launched the Urban Mekong Corridor Initiative (UMCI) in 2024 with the support of SDC. Since then, the initiative has gained remarkable momentum. Cities Alliance stands ready to support a coherence of effort that aligns investment to build on the agency of local actors and their transformative action. Building on our members' strengths, with UCLG ASPAC at the forefront, let us continue to build this momentum, uniting governments, civil society, and development partners to drive inclusive and green transformations in the Mekong region. Together, we can turn today's challenges into tomorrow's opportunities.

- Dr. Greg Munro, Cities Alliance Director



STRATEGIC ROLE OF THE URBAN MEKONG CORRIDOR




The Mekong River is one of Asia’s most vital transboundary rivers, linking the rapidly urbanising cities of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam. As a key trade and development axis, the Mekong Corridor serves as an economic lifeline for the region, supporting urban GDP while shaping environmental stability and social cohesion. These cities are not only engines of growth but also critical hubs for regional collaboration, driving innovation and shared prosperity.

The [UMCI](#) builds on this strategic foundation, serving as the first dedicated platform to foster collaboration and investment among Mekong cities. By engaging regional governance mechanisms such as ASEAN, the Mekong River Commission, and UCLG ASPAC, the UMCI connects cities and their stakeholders across national borders. Through coordinated action, it supports cities in addressing shared challenges like climate resilience, infrastructure development, and equitable urban growth.

With its focus on aligning local action with regional priorities, the UMCI ensures that Mekong cities are prepared to manage rapid urbanisation. This strategic corridor is poised to become a model of cross-border collaboration, where cities work together to build a more resilient and prosperous future for the region.

Importantly, the initiative also considers the role of migration in shaping urban dynamics, ensuring that new arrivals are integrated into inclusive urban strategies.

- Dr. Brigitte Hoermann, Lead, Cities Alliance Global Programme for Inclusive Green Cities at the inaugural Dialogue in February 2024



DIALOGUE FOR RAPIDLY GROWING TOWNS AND CITIES ALONG THE MEKONG CORRIDOR FOR INCLUSIVE GREEN GROWTH



Integrating environmental sustainability into urban planning is crucial to addressing climate change, waste management, and water resources. These challenges demand innovative solutions and collective action across the Mekong region.

- H.E. Mr. Phouvong Luangxaysana, Vice Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Lao PDR at the inaugural Dialogue in Vientiane, February 2024

The Urban Mekong Corridor Dialogues are a cornerstone of the Urban Mekong Corridor Initiative, fostering collaboration among cities, local governments, civil society, and national and regional governance bodies. Co-organised by Cities Alliance and UCLG ASPAC, which also convenes the ASEAN Mayors Forum (AMF), the Dialogues provide a platform for peer learning and strategic coordination. At the 2024 AMF in Vientiane, the UMCI was formally included in the AMF Action Plan 2025, reinforcing its role in regional urban development efforts.

These Dialogues provide a unique platform for peer learning, partnership building, and co-creating solutions that address the shared challenges of rapid urbanisation, climate change, and sustainable development.

Hosted twice annually by cities along the Mekong River, the Dialogues convene high-level representatives – including mayors, governors, civil society leaders, and technical experts – to share experiences, identify priorities, and align urban strategies with regional goals. Themes such as solid waste management, green infrastructure, and inclusive economic growth are explored in action-oriented sessions and field visits, enabling cities to exchange knowledge and adopt best practices tailored to their unique contexts.

A key feature of the Dialogues is their focus on building transboundary solidarity and fostering innovative approaches that strengthen climate resilience, regional economic cooperation, and social cohesion. Migration dynamics are also considered, ensuring that cities can integrate new arrivals into their development plans in ways that promote inclusivity and economic productivity.

By creating a recurring platform for meaningful engagement, the UMCI Dialogues are helping Mekong cities chart a path toward inclusive and sustainable growth, where collective action strengthens urban resilience and drives long-term prosperity for the entire region.



I urge each of you to seize this opportunity to chart a course towards a more sustainable and resilient urban future. May this Dialogue serve as a productive and enriching platform for knowledge exchange, partnership building, and the advancement of the UMCI. Together, let us turn challenges into opportunities, obstacles into stepping stones, and aspirations into reality. The journey ahead may be arduous, but with unity of purpose and unwavering resolve, we can navigate the Urban Mekong Corridor towards a brighter tomorrow.

- Dr. Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi, Secretary-General of UCLG ASPAC, at the inaugural Dialogue in Vientiane, February 2024

I have never attended an event like this, where cities across four countries along the Mekong River are convened to exchange ideas and solutions."

- Lim Ymeng, Director, One Window Service Office, Battambang, at the second Dialogue in Phnom Penh, December 2024

Inaugural Dialogue in Vientiane, February 2024: City leaders, representatives from civil society, the private sector, and international partners adopt a commitment to inclusive green growth, marking a pivotal step towards sustainable regional development.



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Vietnam is at the end of the Mekong River. What happens upstream directly affects us downstream.

- Ngo Trung Hai, Secretary General, Association of Cities of Vietnam, at the second Dialogue in Phnom Penh, December 2024

Participants at the second Dialogue in Phnom Penh, December 2024



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Urban migration and development present immense opportunities, but also significant challenges. Collaborative efforts like the UMCI are essential for fostering resilience and inclusivity.

- Reto Grüniger, SDC Head of Cooperation, at the second Dialogue in Phnom Penh, December 2024

MEKONG CITY LEADERS COMMIT TO INCLUSIVE GREEN CITIES



At the conclusion of the Dialogue, city leaders, along with representatives from civil society, the private sector, and international partners, collectively adopted seven significant outcomes, marking a pivotal step towards regional sustainable development. By declaring their commitment to the goals and principles of the UMCI, they recognised the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the rapid urbanisation and development of the Mekong region. The commitments include:

1. **Collaborative Action.** Actively participate in collaborative efforts by sharing knowledge, resources, and good/best practices to address the critical challenges, risks, and opportunities facing the Mekong Basin.
2. **Inclusive Urban Approach.** Work towards an inclusive approach to urban development, ensuring that small and intermediary cities and local governments are given particular consideration and support.
3. **Inclusive Green Growth.** Promote and implement strategies for inclusive green growth, aligning sustainable economic development with environmental stewardship and social equity.
4. **Multi-Level Stakeholder Engagement.** Engage in open and inclusive communication and collaboration across various levels of governance with all stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, and international partners.
5. **Regular Participation and Review.** Meet biannually to review progress, discuss collective challenges, share experiences, and adapt strategies as needed, ensuring the continuous relevance and effectiveness of the initiative's efforts.
6. **Representation and Advocacy.** Represent the interests and needs of the respective cities, local governments, and organisations by advocating for policies, strategies, initiatives, and actions that support the objectives of the UMCI.
7. **Collaborative Access to Finance and Technology.**



CITY VISIONS: MEKONG'S MAYORS AND GOVERNORS



In order to address the adverse impacts of climate change, partnerships between cities along the Mekong Basin will be crucial and will require capacity building, knowledge sharing, and networking among partners. Let us continue to work together to ensure that our vision and commitments turn into reality.

– H.E. Mr. Atsaphangthong Siphandone, Governor of Vientiane Capital, at the inaugural Dialogue in Vientiane, February 2024

Vientiane, Lao PDR

H.E. Mr. Phouvong Vongkhamsao, Vice Governor of Vientiane Capital

Vientiane’s vision of becoming a green city by 2030 is characterised by livability, attractiveness, environmental friendliness, quality economic growth, efficient resource use, modern technologies, resilience to natural and climate risks, social inclusivity, and improved quality of life for all citizens. This ambitious vision is supported by setting focus tasks aimed at overcoming key challenges, including sustainable waste and wastewater management, sustainable travel and transportation, and the development of public green spaces.

Vientiane has embarked on comprehensive strategies to enhance SWM, aiming to ensure 100 per cent waste collection coverage by 2030. Vientiane’s strategy also embraces Nature-based Solutions (NbS) to tackle urban environmental challenges. The city’s commitment to NbS signifies a broader approach to urban planning, where natural and engineered solutions are combined to create a sustainable and resilient urban environment.

Vientiane’s comprehensive strategy for inclusive green development showcases a forward-thinking approach to urban planning and sustainability. Vientiane aims to transform into a model green city by 2030, setting a precedent for sustainable urban development in the Mekong region.







Luang Prabang, Lao PDR

H.E. Mr. Somdy Phonesavath, Vice Mayor of Luang Prabang

As a UNESCO World Heritage site, Luang Prabang is a centre of cultural heritage and tourism. The city also plays a pivotal role as central administration for Luang Prabang Province and northern Laos. It is a member of several international organisations, including the ASEAN Smart Cities Network and the International French-Speaking Mayors Association (AIMF), and networks with 16 friendship cities globally.

Projections indicate a steady increase in population from 92,028 in 2015 to 114,692 by 2035, highlighting rapid urbanisation and the city's attraction as a hub for economic and educational opportunities. The economy of Luang Prabang has shown significant growth; its GDP comprises agriculture and forestry (22 per cent), services and trade (18 per cent), and industry and handicraft (60 per cent).

In 2023 the economy grew 6.2 per cent, bringing the total GDP to an average of LAK 6.194 billion (US\$1,452) per person per year. This growth is supported by tourism services and trade in the urban area, agriculture and forestry in rural areas, and industry in the suburban areas.

Luang Prabang envisions enhancing its status as a World Heritage site while fostering sustainable development that balances cultural preservation with economic growth. The city aims to continue its trajectory towards becoming a model of heritage conservation and sustainable tourism, serving as a living example of harmony between past and present, culture, and commerce.

Luang Prabang believes in the power of collaboration across the Mekong to preserve our rich cultural landscapes while fostering green and inclusive urban development, setting a precedent for future generations.

- H.E. Mr. Somdy Phonesavath, Vice Mayor of Luang Prabang



Thakhek, Lao PDR
Mr. Keolundone
Chanthapany,
Mayor of Thakhek

Located in Lao PDR's Khammouane Province, Thakhek is a significant urban hub with a strategic position that plays a crucial role in the socio-economic development and connectivity of the region.

Thakhek and its neighbouring cities form a vital trade corridor stretching 129 km along the waterways that connect Laos to Thailand. This geographical advantage has made these cities central to local trade and livelihoods. Demographic data indicates a diverse and growing population that benefits from the city's strategic location for commerce and trade.

Thakhek faces various environmental and economic vulnerabilities, including climate-related hazards that pose significant challenges to the city's development and sustainability. Its strategic development plan emphasises trade and services, industrial development, and agriculture as key areas for growth.

Through effective resource management, community cooperation, and strategic planning, Thakhek is addressing its environmental and economic challenges head-on. The city's focus on sustainable practices, demographic growth, and strategic economic sectors underscores its potential to thrive as a resilient and prosperous urban centre in the Mekong region.



Pakse, Lao PDR
H.E. Mr. Boualy
Phetsongkham,
Mayor of Pakse

Pakse City in Champasak Province, Lao PDR, is an emerging urban centre striving towards sustainable development and efficient waste management. It has over 12,000 households and over 88,000 inhabitants. The majority of citizens engage in trade and services (63 per cent), civil service (28 per cent), and agriculture (eight per cent).

With a focus on enhancing the city's infrastructure and environmental sustainability, Pakse has implemented significant measures in SWM and NbS to address urban environmental challenges.

Pakse envisions becoming a model city for sustainable development in Lao PDR, where effective SWM and NbS drive urban resilience and environmental sustainability. Through comprehensive SWM strategies and the integration of NbS, Pakse aims to achieve a harmonious balance between urban development and natural resource conservation, ensuring a livable, green, and resilient urban environment for current and future generations.



**Stung Treng,
Cambodia**
H.E. Pen Linat,
Governor of Stung
Treng, Cambodia

Stung Treng is a rapidly growing city in northeastern Cambodia strategically located south of the Lao PDR border. It plays a key role in regional connectivity along the Mekong Corridor. The city is experiencing steady economic expansion, primarily driven by agriculture, eco-tourism, and small enterprises.

Stung Treng envisions itself as a clean, resilient, and economically vibrant city, capitalising on its rich natural resources and strategic location. Priorities include improving public services, enhancing solid waste and water management, and strengthening disaster resilience against seasonal floods, which currently affect over 1,000 households annually. The city is committed to sustainable urban planning and sees participation in the UMCI as an opportunity to foster regional collaboration, attract investment, and integrate into larger economic networks.



Kratie, Cambodia
Mr. Sreng Sopheap,
Deputy Governor
of Kratie Province,
Cambodia

Kratie, known for its rich cultural heritage and unique riverine ecosystem, is positioning itself as a model for sustainable urban and economic development along the Mekong Corridor. The city is an important regional centre that balances traditional agriculture, eco-tourism, and emerging industrial sectors. Kratie's economic priorities include strengthening trade networks, promoting community-based tourism, and modernising infrastructure to enhance connectivity and resilience.

As an ecologically significant city, Kratie is committed to preserving its natural assets while fostering green growth. Investments in waste management, climate adaptation, and clean energy are central to the city's long-term strategy. By engaging in the UMCI, Kratie aims to leverage regional partnerships to enhance cross-border economic linkages, improve urban infrastructure, and ensure inclusive development for all residents.



Kaysone Phomvihane City, Lao PDR

**Mr. Prasongsinh Chaleunsouk,
Mayor of Kaysone Phomvihane City,
Savannakhet Province, Lao PDR**

In harnessing the synergy of Kaysone Phomvihane's unique position, we recognise that collaboration across the Mekong's borders is key to unlocking sustainable growth and environmental harmony for all.

- Mr. Prasongsinh Chaleunsouk, Mayor of Kaysone Phomvihane City, Savannakhet Province, Lao PDR

Kaysone Phomvihane City is a burgeoning municipality spread over an area of 779.03 km² and the heart of Savannakhet Province. It has a population of 133,857 and a population density of 172 people per km². The city is structured into 67 villages and 13 village clusters, reflecting a well-organised urban layout marked by orderly roads, buildings, parks, and houses.

Strategically positioned as an economic, trade, and transportation hub, the city leverages its role as a point of exchange in the East-West Economic Corridor. Its Special Economic Zone and the Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge to Mukdahan enhance its status as a centre for domestic and international trade. The presence of natural attractions and cultural sites further enhances its development potential.

Kaysone Phomvihane City aspires to capitalise on its strategic location and rich cultural heritage to become a dynamic centre of trade, industry, and sustainable development, fostering an urban environment that supports growth while preserving its unique identity.



Nong Khai, Thailand

Mr. Rachan Sunhua, Governor of Nong Khai Province, Thailand

Nong Khai has a goal of developing the province in the next 20 years to become a sustainable city to live in, a leader in agricultural bio-industry, a creative tourism economic corridor, and a business centre that grows in a balanced and sustainable way.

- Mr. Rachan Sunhua, Governor of Nong Khai Province

Nong Khai is located across the Mekong River from Vientiane, Laos, and the river plays a pivotal role in the intertwined development of these neighbouring cities. The construction of the first Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge in 1994 served as a critical infrastructure, cementing Nong Khai's position as a gateway for border trade links within the ASEAN region, particularly with Indochina and Southern China.

This bridge facilitates transportation connections and contributes significantly to fostering trade and investment between the two nations, operating under the concept of parallel cities, regional economic integration, and enhanced cross-border cooperation and economic development across Southeast Asia.

Nong Khai Province has established three key strategic positions to advance its vision of Nong Khai as a livable city with sustainable development and effective environmental management:

1. **Organic Agriculture:** Nong Khai aims to transition towards organic agriculture, guided by the holistic principles of the Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) model, which integrates bioeconomy, circular economy, and green economy. The city has adopted the Nong Khai Basic Organic Standard to elevate its agricultural products to international standards.
2. **Mekong Basin Tourism City:** Nong Khai is set to become a premier tourism destination that showcases its natural heritage, culture, and local identity, enriching the visitor experience.
3. **Regional Trade Gateway:** In collaboration with neighbouring Lao PDR and Vientiane City, Nong Khai serves as a pivotal gateway for border trade within the ASEAN region, including Indochina and Southern China, promoting regional development.



As the largest city in the Mekong River collaboration, Phnom Penh is committed to sharing its journey and lessons learned in urban development with fellow towns and cities along the transboundary corridor, aiming to collectively achieve green and inclusive growth.

- H.E. Mr. Suy Serith, Vice Governor of Phnom Penh Capital City, Cambodia



Phnom Penh, Cambodia

H.E. Mr. Suy Serith, Vice Governor of Phnom Penh Capital City, Cambodia

Phnom Penh, the vibrant capital of Cambodia, stands at the confluence of three great rivers: the Mekong, Tonle Sap, and Bassac. With a population exceeding 2.5 million, including a daily influx of tourists and traders, Phnom Penh sprawls over 695.218 km², making it a densely populated area with 3,295 people per km².

Population trends have shown remarkable growth, from 616,000 in 1990 to an estimated 2,748,953 in 2023. This rapid urbanisation has made Phnom Penh a magnet for those seeking better economic and educational opportunities, prompting the government to adopt a new Master Plan on Land Use 2035 to manage urban development effectively.

Economically, Phnom Penh is a powerhouse, with average growth rates around seven per cent per year. It is Cambodia's economic centre and relies heavily on commerce (including garments), trading, small and medium enterprises, and a booming property business. Tourism also plays a significant role, positioning the city as a major tourist destination in Southeast Asia. The city's main employment sectors include agriculture (48.7 per cent), services (31.5 per cent), and industry (19.9 per cent), with a per capita GDP of US\$1,916 in 2003. The informal sector also contributes significantly to employment and GDP.

Phnom Penh envisions becoming an upper-middle-income city by 2030 and a high-income city by 2050. This vision is built on sustainable growth, political stability, and development, aiming for a prosperous, dynamic community living in harmony with its rich cultural and natural heritage.



Mukdahan's vision for development is anchored in the belief that cross-Mekong collaborations can cultivate a fertile ground for sustainable and inclusive progress, enriching lives on both sides of the river.

- H.E. Mr. Worayan Bunnarat, Governor of Mukdahan, Thailand

Mukdahan, Thailand

H.E. Mr. Worayan Bunnarat, Governor of Mukdahan, Thailand

The capital of Mukdahan Province in northeast Thailand, the city of Mukdahan plays a crucial role in the country's economic and social landscape, particularly as a gateway to Lao PDR and the broader Mekong region.

Mukdahan faces several development challenges and opportunities, including enhancing trade competitiveness, investing in international connectivity, and raising agricultural standards through technology and innovation. Other focus areas include tourism development based on the Mekong lifestyle and urban and community development for sustainable living. The vision for the next 20 years emphasises transforming Mukdahan into a modern commercial city with high-quality agriculture and tourism, connected to global markets.

Mukdahan aspires to be a modern commercial hub that leverages its strategic location along the Mekong River, fostering high-quality agriculture and becoming a pivotal point for international connectivity. It aims to sustainably balance economic growth with natural resource management and environmental conservation, striving for a community where modernity meets tradition in harmony.



Battambang City, Cambodia

**Mr. Lim Ymeng, One
Window Service
Director, Smart City
Team, Battambang**

Battambang, a historically rich and strategically located city in northwest Cambodia, is committed to sustainable urban development through nature-based solutions (NbS). With a population of approximately 170,000, the city is recognised for its agricultural strength, heritage buildings, and quality living environment. However, Battambang faces increasing challenges from flooding, riverbank erosion, and the need for resilient infrastructure.

To address these issues, Battambang is implementing key initiatives such as upgrading its drainage and sewage systems, reinforcing riverbanks, and reimagining public spaces to enhance functionality and inclusivity. The city's "One House, One Tree" project is a flagship initiative promoting urban greening, while efforts are underway to integrate NbS into local policies, university curricula, and urban planning practices. Moving forward, Battambang seeks strategic partnerships, technical expertise, and access to global funding to advance its vision of a climate-resilient and livable urban future.



Kampong Cham City, Cambodia

**H.E. Heng Vanny, Deputy
Governor of Kampong
Cham Province**

Located in the heart of Cambodia along the banks of the Mekong River, Kampong Cham City is a vital commercial, cultural, and educational centre in Kampong Cham Province. Stretching across 22.15 km², the city has a population of 42,433, with a density of 1,915 individuals per km².

The economy of Kampong Cham is diverse, anchored in sales and trading (27.4 per cent), civil service (24.2 per cent), services (18.4 per cent), workers (16.4 per cent), agricultural work (11 per cent), and handicrafts (2.6 per cent). The Kizuna Bridge enhances the city's allure by facilitating accommodation, shopping, and tourism and contributes to the local economy through markets, room rentals, hotels, guesthouses, and restaurants.

Kampong Cham envisions itself as a thriving market town that maximises its geographical and cultural assets to become a regional hub for commerce, tourism, and education. By embracing its rich heritage and leveraging the strategic advantage of the Mekong River, the city aims to foster sustainable economic growth, enhance the quality of life for its residents, and attract national and international visitors.



Can Tho and the Mekong Delta, Vietnam

Dr. Ngo Trung Hai, General Secretary of the Association of Cities of Vietnam (ACVN)

Can Tho is a pivotal city in the Mekong Delta and the fourth-largest city in Vietnam. It is the economic centre of the Mekong Delta and a critical hub for transportation, commerce, and tourism. With its rich cultural heritage and strategic location on the Mekong River, the city is a vital link between the countries in the ASEAN region, Indochina, and Southern China, fostering trade and investment across borders.

Can Tho is a pivotal city in the Mekong Delta and the fourth-largest city in Vietnam. It is the economic centre of the Mekong Delta and a critical hub for transportation, commerce, and tourism. With its rich cultural heritage and strategic location on the Mekong River, the city is a vital link between the countries in the ASEAN region, Indochina, and Southern China, fostering trade and investment across borders.

The population of Can Tho is characterised by its dynamic growth, contributing to the diverse and vibrant fabric of the city. This demographic vitality fuels the city's economy, which is diverse and includes sectors such as agriculture, aquaculture, manufacturing, and services. The Mekong Delta, with Can Tho at its heart, is renowned for its agricultural output, particularly in rice, fruit, and fish, supporting not only Vietnam but also export markets.

Economic trends in Can Tho and the wider Mekong Delta region reflect a trajectory towards sustainable development, with initiatives aimed at integrating eco-tourism, cleaner industries, and sustainable agricultural practices.

These efforts are designed to ensure that economic growth does not come at the expense of the environment, highlighting a commitment to green growth principles.

Can Tho's vision is to be a region of high development relative to the country by 2050, offering quality of life for its residents and becoming an attractive destination for tourists and investors. It envisions prosperous communities thriving in harmony with preserved and developed vital wetland ecosystems, leveraging natural and cultural resources for sustainable socio-economic growth.

● **Situated at the delta of the Mekong River, Can Tho's destiny is inherently linked to the actions of our upstream neighbours. The commitment to collaborative and green development is not just a choice, but a necessity for a shared future.**

- Dr. Ngo Trung Hai, General Secretary of the ACVN

CASE STUDY

Surabaya's Urban Renewal A Model for Climate-Resilient Cities

Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city, has undergone a remarkable transformation under the leadership of Mayor Tri Rismaharini, turning from a congested, flood-prone metropolis into one of the country's most livable urban centres. With a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability and urban resilience, Surabaya has implemented NbS that directly address climate vulnerabilities while enhancing public spaces and community well-being.

A key component of Surabaya's urban renewal strategy was tackling flooding and waste pollution, which are also common challenges in Mekong cities. Mayor Risma spearheaded initiatives to clean up the city's rivers, install urban drainage systems beneath widened sidewalks, and expand green spaces with urban forests that absorb excess rainwater. Additionally, large-scale tree planting efforts and the conversion of former landfill sites into public parks have reduced the urban heat island effect and improved air quality.

One of the most innovative projects has been the repurposing of Taman Harmoni, a former landfill site, into a thriving urban park with green corridors and bamboo avenues. This project not only rehabilitated degraded land, but also provided new recreational spaces for residents, demonstrating how environmentally degraded areas can be reclaimed for public benefit.

Sources: <https://www.silverkris.com/inspiration/arts-culture/design-architecture/surabaya-renewal/>;
<https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2022/03/01/surabayas-antidote-to-rise-of-concrete-jungles.html>

Community Involvement and Education

A crucial aspect of Surabaya's success has been the active involvement of the community. Educational programs and public awareness campaigns have encouraged residents to participate in environmental initiatives, such as tree planting and waste management. This collective effort has fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility among citizens, ensuring the long-term sustainability of these projects.

Replicability for Other Cities

Surabaya's experience highlights how strong leadership, community participation, and innovative urban planning can drive climate adaptation and environmental resilience. For Mekong cities facing similar climate risks, Surabaya serves as a replicable model for integrating NbS into city planning—demonstrating that sustainable urban growth and climate action can go hand in hand.

By adopting similar nature-based solutions, other cities can address their unique environmental challenges while promoting a healthier, more sustainable urban environment.



STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSIVE AND GREEN URBAN GROWTH



The Urban Mekong Corridor is a critical platform for fostering sustainable urban development, ensuring that cities along the Mekong grow with resilience, inclusivity, and shared prosperity.

Mr. Say Kosal, President of the National League of Local Councils of Cambodia and Councilor of Russey Keo Municipality, at the Phnom Penh Dialogue, December 2024

Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability

The Mekong region faces increasing vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, with cities experiencing more frequent floods, prolonged droughts, and rising temperatures. Rapid urbanisation compounds these challenges, placing immense pressure on natural resources and infrastructure. Informal settlements, often home to marginalised populations, are particularly at risk, as they lack the infrastructure needed to withstand climate impacts.

The UMCI strengthens climate resilience by equipping cities with the tools and strategies to adapt to these challenges. Participatory

vulnerability assessments, NbS, and locally driven action plans are central to this approach. For example, urban planning that integrates flood control, early warning systems, and water resource management not only protects communities, but also reduces economic losses. The UMCI also addresses waste management and marine pollution as critical components of climate action, promoting circular economy principles to reduce methane emissions and prevent plastic leakage into the Mekong River. This holistic approach ensures that cities are better prepared to mitigate risks while contributing to regional environmental sustainability.



“We reaffirm our support for all cities in the Mekong region, were we explore a loan proposal on SWM across multiple cities and towns in for sustainable and resilient urban development.

Ms. Jana Uno, Senior Urban Operations Investment Specialist, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

Nong Khai Province, Thailand

Jaratpong Kamdokrap, Chief of the Nong Khai Provincial Office for Local Administration



Nong Khai Province has embarked on an innovative journey to tackle the pressing issue of waste management. It has adopted a multi-faceted approach that emphasises household waste separation, the promotion of the circular economy, and the engagement of both the community and private sector in sustainable waste practices.

In Nong Khai Province, the daily production of solid waste amounts to approximately 490.63 tons. Of this, 67 per cent (328.77 tons) is managed effectively each day, showcasing the province's commitment to sustainable waste management practices. Specifically, 28.14 per cent of the waste is disposed of in accordance with academic and environmental principles, ensuring safe and environmentally friendly waste processing. A significant portion of the waste, 38.87 per cent, is repurposed or reused, reflecting the province's robust efforts in promoting recycling and the circular economy. This approach mitigates environmental impact and underscores the community's active participation in sustainable waste management practices.

Initiatives and Achievements

- **Wet waste separation programme:** To combat global warming, Nong Khai Province launched a programme encouraging households to separate wet waste. This initiative aligns with Thailand's Voluntary Greenhouse Gas Reduction standards and aims for universal household participation. As a result, 113,988 households have successfully adopted wet trash cans, significantly contributing to the province's environmental sustainability goals.

- **Recycle waste separation and circular economy:** The province has focused on the separation of recyclable waste, urging residents to embrace the circular economy's principles of reduce, reuse, and recycle. This effort includes widespread campaigns to raise awareness and encourage community participation in waste reduction and recycling. A notable outcome of this initiative is the establishment of 38 wastebanks across Nong Khai, which collectively amassed 7,124.69 tons of recyclable waste in 2023, translating to significant community income of THB 35,839,937.28.
- **Hazardous waste collection:** Recognising the dangers of hazardous waste, Nong Khai has facilitated separate disposal mechanisms for such materials. Local administrative organisations have installed designated collection points in every village or community, leading to the safe disposal of 4,357.30 kg of hazardous waste in 2023.
- **Local volunteer network:** To bolster its waste management efforts, the province has established a Local Volunteers that Save the World network, recruiting at least one volunteer per household to participate in activities aimed at preserving natural resources and the environment. This initiative has attracted 119,299 households, resulting in a robust volunteer force of 121,685 members dedicated to environmental preservation.



Vietnam Woman Floating Market. © AdobeStock.com

- **Waste management clusters:** To streamline waste management operations, Nong Khai supports local government organisations in forming clusters, thus facilitating more efficient and effective waste handling processes.
- **Private sector engagement:** Nong Khai actively encourages private investment in waste management solutions that are environmentally safe and sustainable. A pivotal achievement in this domain is the partnership with Nong Khai Na Yu Co., Ltd., which led to the establishment of a facility capable of processing 380 tons of waste per day into 6 MW of electricity. The facility commenced operations in December 2022. This project is addressing waste disposal needs and contributing to solving the country's energy challenges.

Nong Khai Province's comprehensive approach to waste management showcases the potential of integrated, community-engaged strategies in achieving sustainability goals. Through a combination of household participation, circular economy practices, hazardous waste management, volunteer networks, and PPPs, Nong Khai sets a precedent for regions facing similar environmental challenges. Its experience exemplifies how localised initiatives can contribute significantly to global sustainability efforts, paving the way for a greener future.



Nong Khai Province expects that it will help manage solid waste more efficiently and contribute to making people in the Mekong River Basin region have a good quality of life, balance, stability, and prosperity.

- Jaratpong Kamdokrap, Chief of the Nong Khai Provincial Office for Local Administration, Thailand





Managing rapid urbanisation requires bold and coordinated action. Phnom Penh is committed to strengthening waste management, flood resilience, and sustainable mobility, working alongside Mekong cities to drive lasting urban solutions.

- H.E. Mr. Huot Hay, Vice Governor of Phnom Penh, Phnom Penh Dialogue, December 2024



UMCI is strengthening partnerships between all stakeholders, including civil society, youth, and women's groups, to drive inclusive and green urban development across the Mekong region.

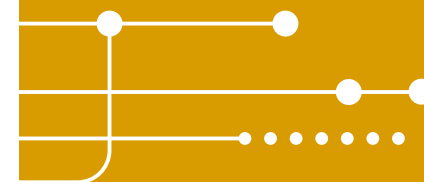
- Ms. Souksaveuy Keotiamchanh,
Founder, Zero Waste Laos



Sustainable solid waste management relies on applying circular economy approaches to waste management and fostering behavioural change within local communities.


- Steven Long, Senior Circular Economy and SWM Expert, from [A Blueprint For Circular Cities: Policies, Systems, and Guidelines for Solid Waste Management in the Rapidly Urbanising Mekong Region](#).

BRIDGING THE INFORMAL AND FORMAL WASTE SECTOR



The informal waste sector plays a critical role in the management of waste in developing cities, contributing significantly to waste collection, sorting, and recycling. It is estimated that without the efforts of informal waste pickers, recycling rates would plummet, underscoring their importance in environmental sustainability. The World Bank notes that integrating the informal and formal sectors through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) can enhance waste management efficiency. Approaches such as Private-Sector Participation (PSP) in solid waste management are potential tools to bridge this gap, aiming for a cohesive waste management ecosystem that acknowledges the contributions of informal workers. This integration not only promises a more effective waste management system but also seeks to improve the socio-economic conditions of waste pickers, who are predominantly women, ensuring safer and more economically sustainable livelihoods.





Integrating informal waste workers into the formal sector enhances recycling efficacy and unlocks the full potential of sustainable solid waste management.

-Dr. Maurice Rawlins, Senior Environmental Specialist, World Bank Lao PDR

Riverine and Marine Plastic Pollution

Marine plastic pollution requires urgent attention due to its downstream impacts. The Mekong River contributes significantly to the plastic load of the South China Sea. As such, the UMCI advocates for coordinated urban strategies to reduce waste leakage into waterways. A dedicated funding appeal highlights the need for innovative solutions, such as upstream interventions, enhanced urban drainage systems, and strengthened enforcement mechanisms.

The MRC has established a Riverine Plastic Monitoring (RPM) programme as part of its commitment to combatting riverine plastic pollution in the Mekong River. The programme aims to assess the basin-wide status and trends of riverine plastic waste pollution through a regional study. It generates data, information, and knowledge that support decision-making on the management of riverine plastic pollution, utilising developed methodologies, protocols, and components for both macro and microplastic monitoring.

A crucial part of the MRC's role in plastic management includes the development and finalisation of detailed methodologies for the RPM, which incorporate various sampling techniques such as fish net sampling in fishing communities, sampling at artificial barriers such as ports and dams, and laboratory quantification and identification of microplastics.

The MRC's interventions align with international efforts including the 2019 ASEAN Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris, and they actively engage in policy dialogue, advocacy, and public awareness programmes. These actions are complemented by potential local actions, such as capacity building for sustainable monitoring and enforcing (voluntary) bans on single-use plastics and provision of alternatives, with the aim of providing sustainable, evidence-based policy-making tools for the region.

The MRC's Riverine Plastic Monitoring Programme underscores the need for transboundary capacity building and sustainable monitoring - methods, evidence, research, and data for evidence-based policymaking.



Pollution has no borders. Research on marine plastic drift from the Mekong River shows that 47 per cent is stranded on the coast of the Philippines, 24 per cent on the coast of Indonesia, 17 per cent on the coast of Vietnam, and eight per cent on the coast of Malaysia.

- Dr. Kongmeng Ly, Ecosystem Specialist,
Mekong River Commission at the inaugural
Dialogue in Vientiane, February 2024



KNOWLEDGE SHARING: WATER MANAGEMENT AND NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS IN THE MEKONG CORRIDOR



The event provided an important opportunity for in-depth discussions on the most effective shared strategies for waste and water resource management, including the adoption of nature-based solutions. Strengthening regional cooperation on these issues is essential for sustainable urban development along the Mekong River.

- Daniele Pittalis, Senior WASH Expert, AICS Hanoi, at the Phnom Penh Dialogue, December 2024





CASE STUDY

NbS in Battambang

Dr. Phanith Chou, Professor and Environmental Economist at the Royal University Phnom Penh

The Battambang Cool Line case study demonstrates how NbS can enhance urban resilience while providing economic and social benefits. A cost-benefit analysis of transforming Street 2 into a climate-smart corridor found that every \$1 invested would generate \$1.58 in benefits, including reduced urban heat, increased tourism, and improved local business activity.

This approach, developed in collaboration with the Battambang Municipal Government and local stakeholders, integrates urban greening, smart sensors, and enhanced public spaces to create a more livable and economically vibrant city.

For governors and mayors of other Mekong cities, the Battambang Cool Line highlights how strategic investments in NbS can address urban heat and flooding while strengthening economic activity. It is an example of the kinds of cost-effective, climate-resilient urban solutions aligned with green growth and sustainability goals that local decision makers are introduced to through the UMCI.

The study was conducted by Water Sensitive Cities Australia (WSCA) and the International Centre for Environmental Management (ICEM), with funding from the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). [GET PERMISSION].

The Mekong subregion (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam) is important to Australia. Australia is working with the Mekong subregion to tackle shared development challenges and ensure a peaceful, stable and prosperous region.

– DFAT on the Mekong -Australia Partnership.

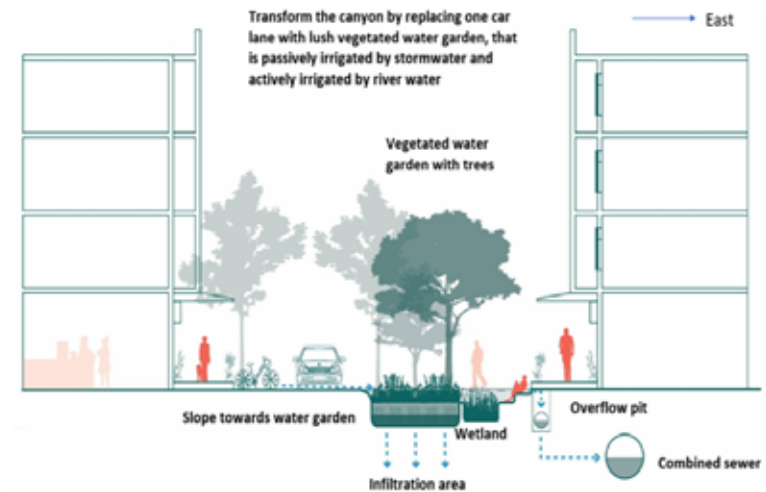
Strategies and Elements of the Battambang Cool Line Option

Baseline: A business-as-usual option, where the road remains stays the same as it is now.

NbS Option: To transform *Street 2* into a cool line with increased green canopy cover and enhanced water management.

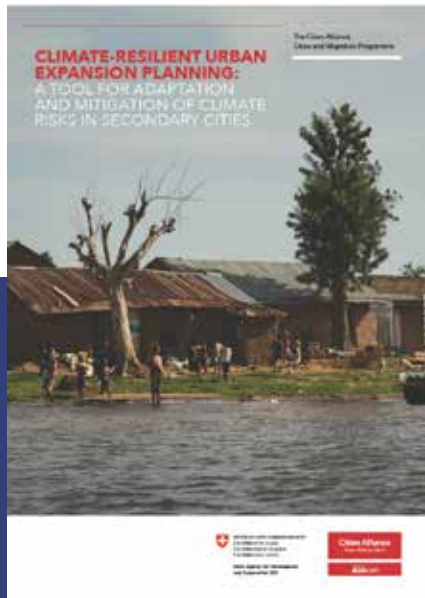
The project elements include:

- a linear wetland
- a swale
- an infiltration garden
- an overflow pit and discharge pipe
- landscape furniture for businesses
- lighting art
- art decoration
- smart heat sensors
- bike parking facilities
- access paths across the garden.

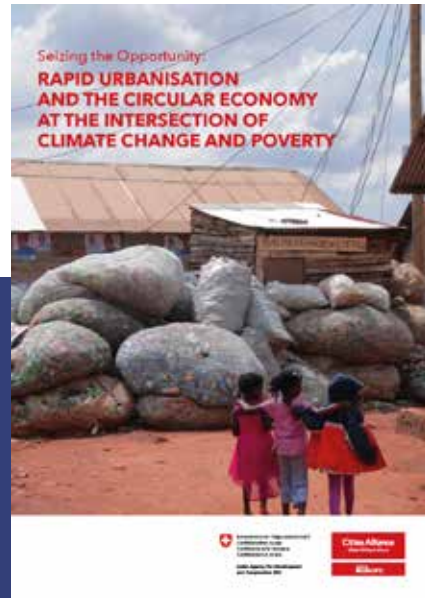


Design concept for NbS street in Battambang (Source: RUCaS project team)

Climate-Resilience Urban Planning and the Circular Economy



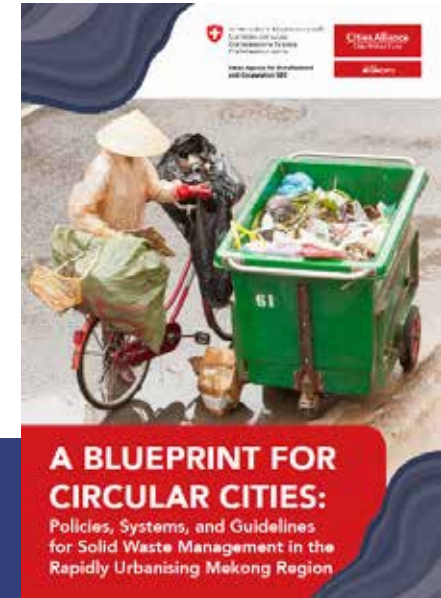
[Climate-Resilient Urban Expansion Planning](#) argues that municipal governments can take meaningful action to prepare for climate change using the same methodology that is used to help secondary cities plan for rapid population growth: urban expansion planning.



[Rapid Urbanisation and the Circular Economy at the Intersection of Climate Change and Poverty](#) examines how circular economy and climate mitigation actions can improve socioeconomic conditions in developing cities, and the role of an integrated, inclusive city planning.



[A Blueprint For Circular Cities: Policies, Systems, and Guidelines for Solid Waste Management in the Rapidly Urbanising Mekong Region](#): A Summary highlights key points of the full blueprint, developed for the UMCI by experts with specialised knowledge of the Mekong Corridor, that is tailored to the unique realities and circumstances of its cities.



[A Blueprint For Circular Cities: Policies, Systems, and Guidelines for Solid Waste Management in the Rapidly Urbanising Mekong Region](#) offers guidance on SWM planning, decision-making, and collaboration, helping stakeholders understand the broader system requirements for sustainable waste management in the region. To ensure strategies are effective and context-specific, the blueprint combines global best practices with local solutions.



INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND CIRCULAR DEVELOPMENT



Urban spaces have emerged as powerful catalysts for innovation and as economic, social and political centres with employment opportunities and services. We are looking forward to using synergies with other initiatives in the region so we can contribute to building inclusive societies where no one is left behind.

- Ms. Adeline Aubry, Head of Inclusive Economic Development for SDC, at the inaugural Dialogue in Vientiane, February 2024





Engineer operating a lathe machine. © NVB Stocker/AdobeStock.com



This Dialogue provided a valuable opportunity to engage with mayors and governors along the Mekong River, aligning with LuxDev's ongoing partnerships in the region.

- Robert De Waha, Resident Representative of LuxDev's Asia Office

The rapidly growing cities of the Mekong Corridor offer significant economic potential, but barriers such as unequal access to opportunities, informality in labour markets, and limited infrastructure can hinder inclusive growth. Smaller towns along the corridor particularly benefit from regional collaboration to pool resources, share knowledge, and attract investment.

By linking cities to technical assistance, financing, and regional markets, the UMCI fosters economic ecosystems that are inclusive, innovative, and resilient. Migration is an integral consideration in these strategies, as cities must plan for and integrate incoming populations into labour markets and urban infrastructure. Supporting local entrepreneurs, providing training for women and youth, and streamlining access to finance are key steps to ensuring that migration becomes a driver of economic dynamism rather than a source of strain.

The UMCI also works to improve access to critical public goods and services that support equitable economic growth by strengthening the enabling environment for local economic development. In secondary cities, where infrastructure gaps and limited municipal resources often constrain opportunities, targeted interventions - such as investment in market infrastructure, streamlined local business regulations, and improved urban services - can significantly enhance economic inclusion.

It places a particular focus on reducing barriers for informal workers and small enterprises, ensuring they can benefit from municipal services, secure business rights, and contribute to local value chains. Through data-driven planning and participatory approaches, the UMCI fosters city-led economic strategies that are both inclusive and resilient.



The future of sustainable development in the Mekong River Basin hinges on towns and cities becoming more interconnected and collaborative, transcending traditional boundaries to forge a shared path towards green growth and inclusivity.

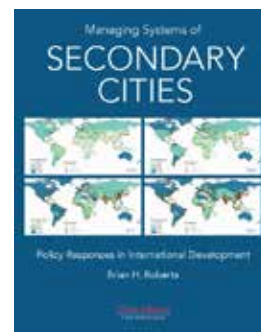
– Professor Brian H. Roberts, Regional Economic Development Specialist and Senior Advisor to Cities Alliance, at the Phnom Penh Dialogue in December 2024

Unlocking the Economic Potential of Secondary Cities

While large metropolitan areas often attract the bulk of investment, secondary cities play a crucial role in driving regional economies. These cities act as key nodes for trade, services, and industry, linking rural economies with larger urban centres. However, many secondary cities struggle with limited access to finance, fragmented governance structures, and underdeveloped infrastructure. Addressing these constraints requires coordinated investment in economic clusters, transport connectivity, and digital infrastructure to enhance productivity and regional competitiveness. The UMCI prioritises these efforts by facilitating cross-city collaboration and technical support to unlock the economic potential of secondary cities.

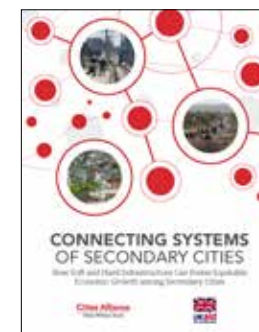
Addressing the Knowledge Gap on Secondary Cities

Apart from its work on the ground, the Cities Alliance is a strong advocate for raising the profile of secondary cities through analytical work and global knowledge transfer. The organisation was one of the first in the development community to focus on this issue in global advocacy. During the last 10 years a number of award-winning books have been published and informed global conferences. Two key publications are:



[Managing Systems of Secondary Cities](#)

This publication provides data on the changing trends of secondary cities and the role they can play in regional and national development. It explores how to make these cities more prosperous and efficient, reviews existing literature and trends, and redefines the concept of a secondary city within the global context.



[Connecting Systems of Secondary Cities](#)

Using a range of case studies, this award-winning book investigates the role of soft and hard infrastructure connecting systems of secondary cities. It argues for a collaborative form of governance between cities to plan and invest into joint connective infrastructure to foster equitable economic growth within and between cities.



ACCESS TO PUBLIC SERVICES AND SOCIAL COHESION

Access to quality public services is fundamental to the social and economic resilience of Mekong cities. However, rapid urbanisation has outpaced infrastructure development, straining essential services such as healthcare, education, water supply, sanitation, and waste management. Secondary cities along the corridor face particular challenges in maintaining service quality while responding to increasing population demands, including the influx of rural migrants. The absence of adequate public infrastructure disproportionately impacts low-income residents, informal workers, and marginalised groups, limiting their ability to participate fully in urban life and economic opportunities.

The UMCI addresses these challenges by supporting cities in identifying service gaps, prioritising investment in critical infrastructure, and strengthening local governance mechanisms to improve urban service delivery. Through targeted technical assistance and investment mobilisation, the initiative works with municipal authorities to develop integrated urban service plans with the goal that all residents – regardless of their socioeconomic status – have equitable access to essential services.

An example of the initiative's areas of intervention is the strengthening of Commune Investment Plans, which enable local governments to integrate service improvements into long-term urban planning processes. This approach not only enhances coordination between municipal authorities and service providers, but also ensures that local communities – including women, persons with disabilities, and migrant populations – have a voice in determining priorities.

UMCI-supported activities include expanding access to health services and counseling for vulnerable urban residents, providing after-school education for children in underserved areas, and improving waste management systems through circular economy principles. Investments in inclusive public spaces, such as markets and green areas, help strengthen social cohesion by ensuring that cities are both functional and livable. By embedding equity and resilience into urban service provision, Mekong cities create sustainable frameworks for inclusive growth, ensuring that no resident is left behind in the region's urban transformation.



Thank you for inviting us to participate in the second Dialogue of the UMCI. It was a pleasure to participate in such an important event.

- Ms Kun Vicheka, Programme Officer, JICA Cambodia office

Empowering Communities to Address Urban Challenges in Phnom Penh

The UMCI awarding its first grant to Phnom Penh for a pilot project aimed at improving services and opportunities for the city's urban poor at the second Dialogue in December 2024.



The UMCI issued its first grant to Phnom Penh for the project [Enhancing Public Services in Phnom Penh's Informal Settlements and Facilitating Access to Decent Work Opportunities for Residents](#).

This pilot project, led by local city stakeholders in an innovative consortium, seeks to strengthen the resilience and inclusion of Phnom Penh's urban poor. It focuses on rural migrants from Cambodia's provinces and supporting the overwhelmed host communities and local administration struggling with the rapid influx.

By involving both local government and community partners, the project aims to build a sustainable framework that improves access to services, enhances labour market integration, and promotes inclusive development within Phnom Penh's urban slums.



GENDER EQUALITY, DISABILITY, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Achieving gender equality and fostering social inclusion are critical to ensuring that Mekong cities are both resilient and sustainable. However, **women, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups - including rural migrants and ethnic minorities - often face systemic barriers** that limit their access to economic opportunities, essential services, and participation in urban governance. These disparities reduce the potential of cities to foster inclusive economic growth and climate resilience.

The UMCI applies a targeted Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) strategy to address these challenges, ensuring that gender equality and social inclusion are not just cross-cutting themes, but core components of urban planning, governance, and service delivery. One of UMCI's key interests is mainstreaming of gender-sensitive urban planning principles by equipping cities with practical tools for designing safe public spaces, gender-responsive transport systems, and inclusive infrastructure that accommodate persons with disabilities and other vulnerable populations.

Economic empowerment is another central pillar. The initiative aims to strengthen women-led businesses and inclusive employment pathways by linking women entrepreneurs and marginalised groups to skills training, finance, and market access opportunities. It also works to close gender gaps in climate adaptation efforts, following Cities Alliance's Her4Climate and Her4Water approaches, which recognise the leadership role of women in water security and sustainable resource management.

Migration is a key consideration in the GEDSI strategy, as women and ethnic minorities migrating to urban areas face heightened vulnerabilities, particularly in securing safe housing, accessing public services, and finding formal employment. The UMCI actively promotes participatory urban

governance, ensuring that migrant and ethnic minority voices are represented in local decision-making structures. This approach not only improves their social and economic integration, but also strengthens urban cohesion by reducing inequalities in service provision and livelihood opportunities.

By placing women, persons with disabilities, and marginalised communities at the centre of urban development, UMCI fosters cities that are inclusive as well as more economically and environmentally resilient. Through its partnerships with local governments, civil society, and regional development partners, the initiative facilitates cities to pursue tangible, gender-responsive, and socially inclusive approaches that benefit all urban residents.

Tools for Mainstreaming Gender Equality into Development Initiatives

Cities Alliance has developed and tested a series of approaches and tools for co-designing gender-sensitive infrastructures and urban policies as well as guidelines for targeting and involving women in urban governance. The tools have been applied in multiple countries around the world, including in Liberia, Nepal, The Gambia, Tunisia, and Uganda.





LOOKING AHEAD: THE NEXT TWO YEARS



Over the next two years, the UMCI will deepen regional collaboration, expand city-led action, and strengthen partnerships to address shared urban challenges. Focus areas include climate resilience, inclusive economic growth, and equitable access to public services, with an emphasis on scalable, locally driven solutions.

A key priority is enhancing cooperation with local and national governments, civil society, regional bodies like ASEAN and the Mekong River Commission, and international development partners. These collaborations will enable cities to mobilise investments, align policies with regional strategies, and exchange knowledge on transboundary issues. Migration and urbanisation dynamics will be a key consideration, ensuring that urban planning and service provision account for the needs of both long-term residents and new arrivals. By prioritising collective action and regional synergies, UMCI aims to position Mekong River cities as resilient hubs of opportunity, sustainability, and economic dynamism, fostering long-term prosperity for the region.



CITIES ALLIANCE

Cities Alliance is a global partnership with over 25 years of experience in fostering inclusive, sustainable, and climate-resilient urban development in rapidly urbanising regions. Hosted by UNOPS as a multi-donor trust fund, it brings together governments, civil society, academia, and the private sector to address critical urban challenges.

With a proven track record of over 400 projects in 80 countries—including 17 in Asia—Cities Alliance has supported initiatives ranging from slum upgrading and gender equality to urban planning and climate resilience. In Asia alone, its initial investment of USD 28 million leveraged USD 524 million in follow-up funding, underscoring

its ability to mobilise resources and deliver lasting impact.

In the Mekong region, Cities Alliance drives the UMCI, providing cities with the tools and partnerships needed to address shared challenges like climate resilience, equitable service delivery, and inclusive economic growth. By engaging regional bodies such as ASEAN, the Mekong River Commission, and UCLG ASPAC, Cities Alliance ensures alignment with regional priorities while fostering collaboration across borders.

Its emphasis on participatory governance ensures that women, persons with disabilities, and migrants are not only included but actively engaged in shaping urban

solutions. Through this approach, Cities Alliance catalyses transformative change, enabling Mekong cities to become hubs of opportunity, resilience, and sustainability.

Since 1999, Cities Alliance has:



Supported cities and strengthened the capacities of urban institutions in **88 countries**.



Leveraged **\$1.7 billion** in additional urban investment.



Supported **176 cities** with a combined population of 240 million to develop inclusive and integrated city development strategies.

Cities Alliance
Cities Without Slums

Hosted by
UNOPS

SWISS AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION (SDC)

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation is Switzerland's international cooperation agency within the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). The goal of development cooperation is to reduce poverty. It is meant to foster economic self-reliance and state autonomy, to contribute to the improvement of production

conditions, to help in finding solutions to environmental problems, and to provide better access to education and basic healthcare services.

Switzerland is proud of its longstanding engagement and partnerships within the Mekong Region. We combine our bilateral activities in Cambodia and the Lao PDR

with selected regional endeavours on such issues as labour migration involving neighboring countries such as Thailand and Myanmar, recognising that many transboundary challenges require regional cooperation and joint solutions.



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

UCLG ASPAC

UCLG ASPAC is one of the regional sections of UCLG, which began its work in 1913 as the International Union of Local Authorities. As the key knowledge management hub on local government issues in the Asia-Pacific region, UCLG ASPAC fosters collaboration between cities, local governments, and

their associations, promoting democratic local governance.

A member of the Cities Alliance, UCLG ASPAC is the formally accredited institution by ASEAN to convene mayors and governors annually at the ASEAN Governors and Mayors Forum (AGMF). Within the UMCI, UCLG

ASPAC plays a pivotal role in facilitating the regional Dialogues, leveraging its unique position to bring together political and technical representatives from cities across the Mekong region. This ensures alignment with ASEAN's priorities while fostering regional knowledge exchange, collaboration, and inclusive urban development.



THE MEKONG RIVER COMMISSION

The MRC is an intergovernmental organisation established to promote and coordinate the sustainable management and development of water and related resources for the mutual benefit and well-being of Mekong member countries, including Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Its mission focuses on four key result areas:

- Enhancing national plans, projects, and resources from a basin-wide perspective to foster integrated water resource management
- Strengthening regional cooperation among member countries to address common challenges and share benefits of the Mekong River
- Improving monitoring and communication of the basin conditions to inform decision-making and policy development
- Operating as a leaner and more effective river basin organisation, optimising its role in the region

The MRC plays a pivotal role in facilitating joint management and shared utilisation of the Mekong River, emphasising a collaborative approach that underscores the interconnectedness of member countries and their shared ecosystems.





ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: PARTICIPANTS AT THE INAUGURAL DIALOGUE IN VIENTIANE, LAO PDR



PARTICIPANTS

LAO PDR

H. E. Mr. Phouvong Luangxaysana, Vice Minister of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE)

H.E. Mr. Athsaphangthong Siphandone, Governor of Vientiane

H.E. Mr. Phouvong Vongkhamsao, Vice Governor of Vientiane

H.E. Mr. Somdy Phonesavath, Vice Mayor of Luang Prabang City

H.E. Mr. Keolundone Chanthapany, Mayor of Thakhek

H.E. Mr. Pasongsinh Chaleunsouk, Mayor of Kaysone City

H.E. Mr. Boualy Phetsongkham, Mayor of Pakse City

Mr. Sudaxay Khampengxayn, Deputy Director General Department of Environment, MoNRE (represented by Mr. Phothala Souksakhone)

Mr. Pongphonh Xayachack, Director of Municipal Administration Division, Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA)

Mr. Nanthaphon Lyvathana, Director of Civil Service Planning and Civil Service Cooperation Division, MoHA

Mr. Phokham Sayasone, Head of Vientiane Cabinet Office

Ms. Bouavone Souklaseng, Director, Department of Planning and Cooperation, Vientiane City

Mr. Somboun Akhavongsa, Head of Vientiane City Office for Management and Service

Ms. Moukdavan Sisoulith, Deputy Director of International Organisation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Yengher Vacha, Deputy Director, Luang Prabang City Administration Office

Mr. Donekham Sengdavong, Head of Environment and Natural Resource, Thakhek District

Mr. Somphone Xaysongkham, City Party Committee, Secretary of Youth Union of Pakse City and Head of Project Implement Unit of Pakse City

Mr. Vongsay Phommixay, Director, Vientiane Department of Foreign Affairs

CAMBODIA

H.E. Mr. Suy Serith, Vice Governor of Phnom Penh Capital City

H.E. Heng Vanny, Deputy Provincial Governor of Kampong Cham Province

Mr. Nuon Samnavuth, Director of Waste Management and Environment Division for Phnom Penh

Mr. Chhay Sopheara, Phnom Penh Capital City Officer

Mr. Oum Vibol, Director of the Provincial Department of Water Resources and Meteorology

VIETNAM

Mr. Ngo Trung Hai, the Association of Cities of Vietnam (ACVN) representing Can Tho City

MEKONG RIVER COMMISSION

Dr. Kongmeng Ly, Ecosystem and Wetland Specialist, MRC

Mr. Vincent Hischier, Seconded SDC Expert, MRC

THAILAND

H.E. Mr. Rachan Soonhua, Governor of Nong Khai Province

H.E. Mr. Vorayan Bunarat, Governor of Mukdahan Province

Mr. Somphong Khumsuwan, Chief District Officer of Mukdahan Province

Mr. Panumas Lumpa, Environmentalist, Senior Professional Level of Mukdahan Province

Mr. Jaratpong Kamdokrap, Chief of the Nong Khai Provincial Office for Local Administration

Mr. Wichai Pinasu, Director of the Nong Khai Provincial Office of Natural Resources and Environment

Ms. Sayamon Pechdee, Director Nong Khai Provincial Office

Mrs. Budsaba Mueangson, Assistant to the Chief, Nong Khai Provincial Office

Ms. Rungkanda Sonwiang, International Relations Assistant

Ms. Nittaya Khampromma, Supply Officer, Nong Khai Provincial Office

CITIES ALLIANCE SECRETARIAT

Dr. Brigitte Hoermann, Lead, Global Programme Cities Migration

Professor Brian Roberts, Senior Advisor

Mr. Steven Long, Senior Advisor

UCLG ASPAC

Dr. Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi, Secretary-General

Mr. Mohammad Ridwan, ASEAN Mayors Forum (AMF) Secretariat

Ms. Dian Noviyanti, Climate Project Officer

Ms. Ms. Aniessa Delima Sari, Advisor

Mr. Noviandri Yotighana, Assistant

SWISS AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION (SDC)

Ms. Adeline Aubry, Head of Inclusive and Economic Development, SDC Lao PDR

Mr. Thanakone Ousavang, National Programme Officer for Governance and Citizen's Participation, SDC Lao PDR

Ms. Sonenaly Phetsiriseng, Migration Officer, SDC Lao PDR

Ms. Somchay Indavong, National Programme Officer for Climate Change and Natural Resource Management, SDC Lao PDR

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS, PRIVATE SECTOR AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Mr. Maurice Rawlins, Senior Environmental Specialist, World Bank Lao PDR

Ms. Soudalay Souannavong, Lead Urban Sector, Asian Development Bank (ADB) Lao PDR

Ms. Jana Uno, Senior Investment Operations Specialist, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

Mr. Michele Boario, Head of Programmes for Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)

Dr. Dindo Campilan, Regional Director for Asia and Hub Director for Oceania, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

Mr. Parry Sanixay, Strategic Partnership Lead, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Laos

Mr. George Asiimwe, Senior Officer Waste Management, Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI)

Mr. Michael Fink, Director, Swisscontact Lao PDR

Ms. Dyan Barutzki, Deputy Project Manager for Waste to Value project, Swisscontact Lao PDR

Mr. Phutthasone Phomvisay, Deputy Secretary-General, Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI)

Ms. Philayhack Phothisane, Deputy Head, SME Service Centre, LNCCI

Ms. Souksaveuy Keotiamchanh, Chief Security Officer, Waste Free Laos

Ms. Baythone Iovanxay, Consultant, ADB urban infrastructure projects

Mr. Phai Akone Sakountava, Chief Operations Officer and Co-founder, Econox Laos

ANNEX 2: PARTICIPANTS AT THE SECOND DIALOGUE IN PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA



Participants during a field visit to the Phnom Penh Fecal Sludge Treatment Plant.

PARTICIPANTS

CAMBODIA

Mr. Pok Sokundara, Secretary-General of the National League of Local Councils (NLC)

Mr. Say Kosal, President of the NLC and Councilor of Russey Keo Municipality

Mr. Map Sarin, President of the National Association of Capital and Provincial Councils (NACPC)

Mr. Moul Thon, Deputy Governor of Battambang Province

Mr. Lim Ymeng, One Window Service Director, Smart City Team, Battambang Province

Ms. Chan Ron, Chief of the Economic and Community Development Office, Rolear Bier District, Kampong Chhnang Province

Mr. Svay Sorng, Kampong Chhnang Province

Mr. Sreng Sopheap, Deputy Governor of Kratie Province

Mr. Choup Phallin, Deputy Director of the Public Works Department, Kratie Province

Mr. Pen Lynat, Vice Governor of the Stung Treng Provincial Board of Governors

Mr. Say Kosal, Governor of the Stung Treng Municipality Board of Governors

Mr. Men Kung, Deputy Director of Provincial Administration, Stung Treng

Mr. Kim Piseth, Technical Staff, Stung Treng

Mr. Ly Sovann, Municipal Governor of Kampong Cham Province

Mr. Heng Vanny, Deputy Provincial Governor, Kampong Cham Province

Mr. Huot Hay, Vice Governor of Phnom Penh

Mr. Nuon Samnavuth, Director of Waste Management and Environment Division, Phnom Penh

Dr. Beng Hong Socheat Khemro, Director General of Housing at the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction

LAO PDR

Mr. Samnane Sonthany, Vice Mayor of Luang Prabang

Mr. Anouphab Phandolack, Technical Staff, Luang Prabang

Mr. Phokham Sayasone, Mayor of Sisattanak District, Vientiane

Ms. Khamla Thammavong, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental of Vientiane

Mr. Prasongsinh Chaleunsouk, Mayor of Keysone

Mr. Thitthaphone, Technical Staff, Keysone

Mr. Phimmasone Thipphamon, Technical Staff, Keysone

Mr. Bounnao Fongkhamdeng, Vice Mayor of Pakse

Mr. Somphone Xaysongkham, Head of Administration of Pakse

Ms. Malaivanh Th, Technical Staff, Pakse

Ms. Khaiamphone, Technical Staff, Pakse

Mr. Phouthala Souksakhone, Deputy Head of Environment, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

Ms Sipaphaphone Chounramany, Director of Macroeconomic Planning Division, Department of Planning, Ministry of Planning and Investment

VIETNAM

Dr. Ngo Trung Hai, Secretary-General of the Association of Cities of Vietnam (ACVN)

MEKONG RIVER COMMISSION

Dr. Kongmeng Ly, Ecosystem and Wetland Specialist

Dr. Phan Nam Long, Riverine Plastic
Monitoring Programme

CITIES ALLIANCE SECRETARIAT

Dr. Brigitte Hoermann, Cities Alliance
Global Lead Inclusive Green Cities

Professor Brian Roberts, Senior Urban Expert

Mr. Steven Long, Senior Circular
Economy and SWM Expert

UCLG-ASPAC

Ms. Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi, Secretary-General

Mr. Aldrin Chandra, Staff

Mr. Mohammad Ridwan, Staff

SDC

Mr. Reto Grüninger, Head of Cooperation

Mr. Christian Distler, Deputy Head of Cooperation,
Lead Inclusive Economic Development

Ms. Sonia Carlotti, Deputy Head of Cooperation,
Lead Governance and Citizen Participation

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS, PRIVATE SECTOR AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Ms. Souksaveuy Keotiamchanh, Civil Society
Advisor for Youth and Women's Engagement
and Founder of Zero Waste Laos

Ms. Baythone Iovanhay, Urban Planner

Ms. Amphavanh Sisouvanh (Mimi), Urban Advisor, Laos

Ms. Monireth Toy, Urban Advisor, Cambodia

Professor Phanith Chou, Environmental Economist
at the Royal University Phnom Penh

Mr. Mourn Samnang, Samatapheap
Khnom Organisation (SKO)

Ms. Kheang Kunthamith, SKO

Ms. Thak Socheat, Cambodian
Women's Crisis Center (CWCC)

Ms. Veronique Puccio, Taramana Foundation

Ms. Faith Considine, Australian Department
of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

Mr. Kang Sin, DFAT

Mr. Koen Everart, European Union (EU)

Mr. Daniele Pittalis, WASH and Water Resource
Management Programme Officer, Italian Agency
for Development Cooperation (AICS) in Hanoi

Mr. Robert de Waha, Resident
Representative of LuxDev Asia

Ms. Kun Vicheka, Programme Officer, Japan
International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

Mr. Tapas Kuila, GrubFeeds

Mr. Sam Phalla (Phalla), Director of
the Cambodian Education and Waste
Management Organization (COMPED)

Mr. Uch Rithy, Deputy Director of COMPED

Ms. Emilie Traub, Network Coordinator for Southeast
Asia at the International Association of French-
speaking Mayors and Local Governments (AIMF)

Ms. Peni Susanti, Director of the Clean Ciliwung River
Movement (Gerakan Ciliwung Bersih)

Ms. Shinta Nur Wahyuni, Technical
Staff, Gerakan Ciliwung Bersih

Mr. Richard Mabbitt, International
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Mr. Tyler Kozole

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