

# ACCELERATING CITY RESILIENCE

A Cities Alliance Joint Work Programme that strategically leverages global expertise, knowledge and financing to address local resilience challenges in cities.



## THE RESILIENT CITY CHALLENGE

As urbanisation, climate change and disasters shape the world, there is increasing recognition that cities need to be more resilient in order to confront the myriad of risks faced by urban communities.

Unequal and unsustainable urban sprawl is combining with the changing climate to create an untenable, precarious situation in cities across the world. The demand for land, decent shelter, transport, employment, energy and social and environmental services have outstripped supply in many urban areas. Internal social and environmental issues also exacerbate the city's vulnerability to external threats.

Many cities are unprepared to handle modest disruptions in food, water, and energy supplies, which have already been or may be affected by changes in climatic conditions. This is especially true for the city's poorest residents, many of whom live in tenuous, informal communities. Although they shoulder very little of the blame for climate change, they are the most vulnerable and will suffer the most from its impact. Thus, the adaptive capacity of people living in informal areas and engaged in the informal economy must be central to resilience solutions.

The pressures and challenges to a safe, clean and healthy urban environment are well documented. The natural environment in and around cities has often been severely degraded, reducing the provision of ecosystem services such as water provision. Inefficient urban sprawl has resulted in the conversion of agriculture, forests, wetlands and other ecosystems. Pollution of land, air and water is a major impediment to a clean and healthy urban landscape.

A city's capacity to achieve comprehensive, long-term resilience depends on how it manages and strengthens the different aspects of resilience: economic, environmental, social and institutional.

In addition, cities and their communities lack many of the data, tools and adequate financing to change the urban development trajectory for more sustainable and equitable cities.

## A UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP TO ACCELERATE CITY RESILIENCE

To support cities in their efforts to become more resilient, Cities Alliance has established a multi-year Joint Work Programme (JWP) on Resilient Cities. The JWP brings together members and partners to promote local resilience strategies through inclusive, long-term, urban planning processes. In keeping with the niche of Cities Alliance, the JWP focuses specifically on addressing the resilience challenges of informal settlements and the working urban poor.

Launched at COP21 in December 2015 in partnership with the Medellin Collaboration on Urban Resilience, the JWP is unique within the resilience field. It is a new type of partnership, with a unique constellation of institutions: slum dweller networks, informal workers, city networks looking at resilience and climate change, combined with development partners, foundations, knowledge partners and multilateral agencies.



This contrasts sharply with the traditional top-down, national-led efforts that have been the hallmark of many resilience approaches in the past. These types of broad partnerships are extremely important to making resilience inclusive; for example, through the JWP, slum dwellers were able to participate in COP21 and share their voice – the first time they have attended a Conference of Parties.

The JWP is also unusual in that it combines support for global knowledge, financing, tools and dialogue, and connects them with on-the-ground technical assistance and implementation. While many other resilience organisations focus on one or more of these aspects, the Cities Alliance JWP brings them all together for a more holistic, integrated approach.

The JWP is chaired by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability. Members include the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, the French Alliance for Cities and Territorial Development (PFVT), GIZ, Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), 100 Resilient Cities, Slum Dwellers International (SDI), The Ecological Sequestration Trust (TEST), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN-Habitat, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), the World Bank and the World Resources Institute (WRI).

The JWP receives state-of-the-art research support from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Urban

## CHANGING VIEWS ON RESILIENCE

As Cities Alliance has become more deeply engaged in city resilience, it has become clear to us that the world view of resilience is evolving, and that cities are viewing resilience stresses as more of a developmental challenge.

When we engage with city leaders, they don't talk about shocks such as flooding, storms or earthquakes when they discuss resilience. Instead, they are keen to discuss long-term resilience stresses that impact city systems – lack of authority for adequate revenue collection, service delivery, and youth unemployment, for example.

While many other organisations focus on one or more aspects of resilience, the Cities Alliance Joint Work Programme brings them all together for a more holistic, integrated approach.

Climate Change Research Network (UCCRN), which serve as its primary knowledge partners.

AECOM, Arup, OECD, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) participate in the JWP as observers.

### Key statistics:

- The world's cities occupy just 3% of the Earth's land, but account for 60-80% of energy consumption and approximately 70% of carbon emissions.
- Nearly two thirds of urban settlements with more than 5 million people are exposed to water-related risks in low elevation coastal zones. 70% of the countries with population in the low-elevation coastal zone have their largest urban area extending into that zone.
- Good solid-waste management empowering informal workers is also important for mitigating climate change. Nearly 5% of global greenhouse gas emissions (1,460 mtCO<sub>2</sub>e) in 2010 came from post-consumer waste in cities.
- Approximately 60% of cities globally do not receive any financial support for their adaptation actions.
- In the worst-case scenario, up to 215 million urban residents could fall back into poverty by 2030 with non-existent or inadequate investment in urban adaptation.
- Average annual loss from disasters in cities could increase to US\$332 billion by 2030.

### The objectives of the Cities Alliance Joint Work Programme on Resilient Cities are to:

1. Convene diverse international organisations to work in partnership for more resilient and sustainable cities and communities.
2. Strengthen local governments by developing and piloting tools to integrate resilience into city planning and development strategies.

3. Ensure urban poor groups are at the centre of citywide resilience solutions.
4. Support local governments and communities to access and deliver finance for resilience, with a focus on innovative global finance opportunities.
5. Drive the collection and application of innovative data tools for more risk-informed, resilient city development.

## FOCUS AREAS OF THE JOINT WORK PROGRAMME

The JWP works with development partners to produce global knowledge, facilitate policy dialogues and support city-level diagnostics and policy recommendations. The goal is to support growth trajectories increasingly characterised by equity, inclusion and environmental sustainability.

The JWP implements its partnership approach through two focus areas, one aimed at the global level and the other at the local level, each with three sub-components:

**Focus Area 1: Global partnerships to facilitate the flow of knowledge and resources to enhance city resilience, supporting the emerging Post-2015 framework, climate change and Habitat III processes.**

Subcomponents:

1. **Harmonising approaches and tools.** The JWP will foster the harmonisation of multiple approaches and diagnostic tools to help cities access the necessary tools to build their resilience. This involves working with JWP members on common metrics and indicators as well as technical advisory support to cities on SDG 11: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".
2. **Innovative finance for adaptive capacity.** Mobilising finance is critical for reducing vulnerability of the most vulnerable communities and transforming cities into sustainable, safe places for all citizens. Catalysing access to innovative finance mechanisms, including risk-based instruments, is a challenge for many urban areas, but it is critical to enhancing cities' ability to reduce exposure and vulnerability to multiple shocks and stresses and increase their adaptive capacity.
3. **Enhancing knowledge and information sharing.** To support institutional capacity development of urban stakeholders, the JWP is facilitating the direct sharing of best practices at key global events such as ICLEI's Resilient Cities, Habitat III in Quito, and COP22 in Marrakesh.

**Focus Area 2: Promoting local resilience strategies through inclusive long-term urban planning processes.**

Subcomponents:

1. **Leveraging knowledge.** As more organisations engage on city resilience work, it is important that the knowledge of JWP members and partners is developed and disseminated to maximise understanding and

integration into city resilience planning. The JWP will develop knowledge products, including online platforms and guidelines targeted at local-level resilience strategies.

2. **Energy resilience.** Cities Alliance will work with cities to develop integrated city energy management plans that will identify issues, opportunities and investments related to supply, demand and access to energy in selected cities. This could potentially extend to sectors ranging from waste management to transport with a specific focus on the energy challenges and solutions found in informal settlements.
3. **Local solutions for resilience.** The JWP will ensure vulnerable communities are an integral part of long-term resilience planning, taking into consideration previous approaches such as slum upgrading and city development strategies. The initiative will support local collection and sourcing of data to inform vulnerability assessments and prioritise critical early adaptation options.

## GLOBAL AND LOCAL ACTION TO PROMOTE CITY RESILIENCE

Work is already underway in efforts to make cities more resilient through activities directly supported by the JWP, the strong initiatives of JWP members and partners, and the vital, everyday efforts of those on the front lines in cities – such as waste pickers, who help reduce greenhouse gases, flooding and disease by keeping the streets clean and recycling, which reduces the carbon footprint of city populations.

### Global Action

The JWP is supporting:

- The development of the [resiliencetools.org](http://resiliencetools.org) web platform, which provides a hub for resources such as tools, case studies, and publications on building resilient cities.
- The Local Governments' Pocket Guide to Resilience, launched at the UNFCCC COP21 in partnership with the Medellín Collaboration on Urban Resilience (MCUR).
- A joint initiative among members to connect local governments with funders and implementation partners to increase access to finance for transformative local resilience projects.

### City and Local Action

JWP initiatives underway include:

- Using the innovative Climate action for URban sustainability (CURB) tool to support 11 cities in Asia, Africa and Latin America to set meaningful GHG emissions targets and develop energy management plans that incorporate informal settlements into the context of broader climate change action plans.
- Improving resilience at the household level by undertaking urban resilience audits of informal settlements and incorporating that information into citywide resilience strategies in three cities.



## ABOUT CITIES ALLIANCE

Cities Alliance is the global partnership for poverty reduction and promoting the role of cities in sustainable development. Partnerships are critical to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We bring together organisations with different perspectives and expertise on city issues around common goals: well run, productive cities that provide opportunities for all residents.

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

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

## CONNECT WITH US

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

[www.facebook.com/citiesalliance/](https://www.facebook.com/citiesalliance/)

[@CitiesAlliance](https://twitter.com/CitiesAlliance)

Omar Siddique  
*Senior Urban Specialist*  
[osiddique@citiesalliance.org](mailto:osiddique@citiesalliance.org)

Julie Greenwalt  
*Urban Environment Specialist*  
[jgreenwalt@citiesalliance.org](mailto:jgreenwalt@citiesalliance.org)

**Cities Alliance**  
Cities Without Slums