



UCLG CONGRESS  
WORLD SUMMIT OF LOCAL  
AND REGIONAL LEADERS

# Sustainable Urban Development

#CitiesAreListening  
Town Hall Track

Policy Papers



## #CitiesAreListening

The 2019 Congress and World Summit will mark the way towards the follow up of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the first review of the New Urban Agenda in 2020.

It will consolidate the policies that UCLG has been promoting within its strategic plan, with a strong focus on localizing the SDGs, aiming at leaving no one, and no place behind, with a key focus on local governments as representatives of communities and for communities, and keeping the four UCLG Policy Councils issues as key pillars.

Special attention will be paid to creating a space of structural dialogue with other constituencies and stakeholders and in particular civil society. For the first time, the outcome will not only be a declaration, but a corpus of integrated policy recommendations resulting from a consultation with other stakeholders and offering both bottom-up continental and region-specific priorities.

The Summit will provide a space to ensure connection between the agenda of the global municipal and regional movement and that of the sister constituencies. A special Track has been set up to this end: The Town Hall - with discussions at the highest levels led by the organized international constituencies.

The Town Hall is the space for dialogue and interaction between different internationally organized civil society and the political leadership of the local and regional governments constituency to jointly define the local global policies. Local and regional leaders cannot achieve these goals on their own, and thus they need to build upon, strengthen and enhance partnerships moving forward. The goal is not only to invite partners and stakeholders to join, but to collaborate in the world that we are building. The Town Hall is structured around 5 sessions with different themes: Accessible Cities; Addressing Informalities; Gender Equality; Right to the City, and Sustainable Urban Development.

Preparations towards the Congress were articulated around an open process of co-creation led by the constituencies themselves and facilitated by the World Secretariat. Each group elaborated policy recommendations for local governments to implement transformative action on the above-mentioned themes. At the Congress' Town Hall sessions – designed by the constituencies themselves –, each document will be presented by the constituency's representatives, discussed with UCLG members and debated with all other constituencies. After deliberations a pooling of recommendations will be defined as a result of the session, which will be presented to the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments.

## Executive Summary

World- wide consensus agrees that multi-stakeholder partnerships are necessary to achieve sustainable urban development. They are needed at every level of decision-making from developing plans, policies and programs to their implementation. This policy paper endeavors to lay out principles to guide public, private and civil society leaders in crafting effective and transformative multi-stakeholder partnerships in the service of promoting sustainable urban development. It offers these ideas in the spirit of providing a basis for discussion among the many parties having an interest in understanding the purpose, structure, and potential contributions of such strategic alliances but cautions that success requires the ability to build on the complementary strengths and core competencies of partners who have diverse interests and different organizational structures and cultures.

### 1. Acknowledgements and Background

Four years ago, global leaders laid out a framework for 21<sup>st</sup> century sustainable urban development, the UN's *Agenda 2030*, endorsing 17 universally-applicable goals ranging from dealing with basic needs like hunger and health, to rights like gender and under-represented groups, to spatial framing like housing, transport, public space. At the same time, they acknowledged that the achievement of any and all of the goals requires strong partnerships at all levels. They reinforced this belief by designating a stand-alone goal on partnerships (SDG 17). One target identifies multi-stakeholder partnerships as critical to the enterprise (e.g. 17.6)<sup>1</sup>. They confirmed this belief in three other global agreements formulated in 2015-2016 (*Sendai Framework* [para 19i]; *Addis Ababa Action Agenda* [ para 10]; *New Urban Agenda* [para 153]. *At the heart of this idea, is that the participation of many diverse people drawn from various constituencies is necessary to meet their aspirations.*

To come down from the lofty realm of international deliberations to the practical sphere of local level implementation where these aspirations have to be carried out, the question of just what constitutes an *effective* multi-stakeholder partnership is central. Moreover, any construct of *sustainable* urban development views multi-stakeholder partnerships as carrying out special responsibilities relating to promoting the transformation of cities and their surrounds. So the real question to be deliberated is: how can a multi-stakeholder partnership be *transformative*?

Let's start with the basics: What is a multi-stakeholder partnership? All definitions contain the notion that collaboration will achieve something individual parties cannot accomplish alone. The dictionary definitions: "stakeholder ("anyone who has an *interest* or *share* in an undertaking or enterprise") and partnership ("a relationship resembling a legal partnership and usually involving *close cooperation* among parties having

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<sup>1</sup> Goal 17 Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development  
Target 17.6 "17.16 Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries."

*specified and joint rights and responsibilities*) capture the fundamental characteristics. Simply stated, multi-stakeholder partnerships are “voluntary strategic alliances” in pursuit of common objectives.

In the realm of sustainable urban development, multi-stakeholder partnerships are complicated. They engage with the tasks associated with managing cities requiring balancing the many inter-related systems affecting the built environment and human resources. While the overall aim is to produce environmentally responsible land use, equitable provision of services, and shared economic prosperity, execution is full of twist and turns, tailored to the political context of a given city and aligned with that city’s needs, resources and objectives.

To be effective and transformative, a joint understanding of the types and purposes of the partnership contributions needs to be clearly worked out among the parties. For example, partnerships can be deployed in problem identification, policy prioritization and alignment, and in mobilization for implementation.

In the first instance, they can contribute many needed elements (e.g. data, specialized knowledge, pilot projects, capacity-building, funding). In the second instance, they can provide a means to negotiate integrated policies and programs (dispute resolution and compromise). In the third instance, through their engagement, they can help ensure the implementation of an agreed on direction with their networks (participation, “buy in,” mobilization of support).

In sum, depending on the issue at hand, multi-stakeholder partnerships can provide additional learning and resources, new solutions, and access to wider networks, audiences, supporters that can have an impact on the system-wide changes required to achieve sustainable urban development. They can tackle large issues such as climate change – the recently renewed City Climate Change Finance Leadership Alliance with 60 partners, all major players in the field, offers an example – or they can focus on smaller concerns – the Guangzhou Prize for Innovation finalist, Public Participatory in 3R Waste Management for Better Surabaya, with far fewer partners but broad citizen participation, is another example. The point is, that in the urban arena, multi-stakeholder partnerships take on many forms, tackle a range of concerns to produce new solutions.

## **2. Assessment and Challenges**

In fact, multi-stakeholder partnerships at all levels have proliferated in recent years, often announced with great fanfare and hope as was the case in the early 2000s of a group of 340 of them developed around sustainable development in general. A five year follow-up study demonstrated that within that time 70% of them had been unproductive.<sup>2</sup> This begs the question of why? And calls for an examination of the critical success factors of the how the remaining 30% had worked.

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<sup>2</sup> Felix Dodds, “The Role of Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships in Implementing the 2030 Agenda.” 2019, accessed online; discussion also in Dodds, *Stakeholder Democracy*, New York: Routledge, 2019.

The answer is: structure. Multi-stakeholder partnerships need to be structured properly, a feat that calls for realistic, careful assessments among the parties considering an alliance. Here are some principles:

- First, the partners need to have the interest (or incentive) and the capacity to work together while recognizing their specific contributions and accepting a willingness to adhere to some coordinating mechanism. For cities, this latter element is critical in order to manage the complexity of the issues, the heterogeneity of the parties and the inevitable value conflicts that surround those engaged in improving urban life, however defined. For some partnerships, this requires paid staff, a facilitator or some mechanism to provide the organizational support to accomplish the items listed below.
- Second, the partners have to include all the important players from the beginning to end, identify and listen to all who will be impacted by the decisions to be taken or programs to be pursued.
- Third, the partners need to be inclusive and mutually respectful, bound together by common objectives, accountability and transparency in their conduct of business. In other words, they need to find ways to build trust in each other.
- Fourth, the partners need to be conscious and aware of the various roles they can play – whether it be to initiate a discussion or frame a transformative approach, to smooth the transformation and/or to accelerate the transformation or some combination of all of these. The closer the roles are to the parties' core missions, the more successful the partnership will be.
- Fifth, all parties must be cognizant that successful and effective multi-stakeholder partnerships are time-consuming. By their very nature, they draw on human resources and call for participatory processes. This translates into costs either in real money or opportunity. For this reason, multi-stakeholder partnerships tend to be most effective when they are short term and focused on well-defined objectives. It is very difficult but not impossible to maintain long-term multi-stakeholder partnerships: needed is vision and committed leadership over time.
- Sixth, multi-stakeholder partnerships need to monitor and evaluate their work. Reasons for such assessments include enhancing the partnership's "organizational learning" and ability to adapt to changing circumstances, its accountability and its transparency, all factors that contribute to its legitimacy and effectiveness.

Within the immediate experience of the authors, here are some examples of types of partnerships chosen for their diversity, scope, purposes and outcomes. Many more exist. These examples and those of other multi-stakeholder partnerships not documented here catalyze interactions among spheres of stakeholders who usually do not connect, youth,

private sector, professionals, local government., women, indigenous peoples, grassroots organizations, researchers, foundations, farmers, and many others.

***An example of a global partnership going local: The General Assembly of Partners (GAP)***, a partnership platform dating from the preparations for Habitat III but now supporting the UN global agreements from 2015 to 2016 at the local level with special attention to *Agenda 2030* (and SDG Goal 11) and the *New Urban Agenda*. It is composed of 17 partner constituent groups who participated in the preparations for Habitat 3 with the goal of giving voice to the formerly unheard. For example, with GAPs support of the Older Persons Partner Constituent Group, references to older persons/ageing moved from 3 in the original zero draft to 27 in the final version of the *New Urban Agenda*. At the conclusion of Habitat III, GAP reconstituted itself to focus on implementation. Again a demonstration of its partners forming alliances to work on selected areas of interest is exemplified by two other groups: Professionals together with Business & Industry developed the Affordable Metropolis initiative launched at WUF IX which will be continued at WUF X, with significant results in between. They released a report based on the involvement of a global coalition of leading public and private housing champions, globally and locally. It showcases a number of relevant case studies in four complementary areas: 1. Local, regional and national policies encouraging construction and renovation of affordable housing for rent or for sale; 2. Financing solutions for developers and users.; 3. Technologies, construction techniques and materials making building affordable housing quickly and less expensively; better to. 4. Shelters for victims of natural catastrophes, migrants and homeless people.

A second example is the alliance between the Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities which launched the Cities for All Campaign's Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities with key support from UCLG, UN- Habitat, the Office of the Special Rapporteur on Disability, Germany's BMZ and GIZ. Local authorities sign on to this Compact working with these two constituencies to build more inclusive and accessible cities.

***An example of a metropolitan partnership focused on energy and transport: The Grand Paris Alliance*** (Cercle Grand Paris de l'Investissement Durable) is a partnership among private sector leaders and public decision makers, charities, research organizations and universities focused on a number of active initiatives in the field of energy efficiency, biodiversity, social inclusion etc. A non-profit active locally in the development of the Grand Paris, it has built on global connections to promote a progressive agenda of social inclusion and capacity building along with investments in physical infrastructure. Typically metropolitan, it is working at the crossroads of global, regional, and subnational levels.

***An example of a partnerships helping set priorities:*** The **Urban INGO Forum** is a consortium of 12 INGOs working on different issues in urban areas in Bangladesh.

Members include Habitat for Humanity Bangladesh, Action Aid Bangladesh, Action Contre La Faim, CARE Bangladesh, Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide, Islamic Relief Bangladesh, Oxfam in Bangladesh, Plan International, Practical Action, Save the Children International, SEEDS Asia, United Purpose, Water & Life, World Renew and World Vision Bangladesh. The Urban INGO forum works closely with government of Bangladesh, especially local government organizations at city level to enhance living conditions of the urban poor in a more effective and coordinated manner. Every year, the Urban INGO forum organizes urban INGO organizers urban dialogues which together more than 700 participants from 24 NGOs, IGOS, Private Sector, Academic Institutions, UN and government agencies to discuss various urban related challenges in Bangladesh and potential solutions often captured through various declarations that the partners then translate into advocacy and implementation programs.

***An example of a partnership delivering goods: Habitat for Humanity Lesotho (HFHL)*** partnered with the urban poor, the government and a financial institution to negotiate secure land tenure on the formal land delivery market. Habitat for Humanity mobilized, and organized women and men involved in informal sector who were ranked among the poorest in Maseru. HFHL negotiated for a block of land from the government and provided a guarantee to the government. The community provided sweat equity while HFHL mobilized the building materials and costs of surveying the land. 143 Low income houses were built at Khubelu village, in Maseru between 2003 and 2006. The houses ranged from a single room with an improved ventilated pit latrine (VIP) to a three-room dwelling- also with a VIP. Habitat for Humanity arranged for a block survey of the land. The community members moved into the houses. Habitat for Humanity registered the leases and negotiated payment terms with the individual community members. A beneficiary only secured a title deed after they had paid all their costs. In May 2018, 37 beneficiaries consisting of 4 male and 33 females had completed their payments and registered their leases. The project which delivered 143 housing units benefited poor people who lived in Maseru. The HFHL intervention has provided secure land tenure for the beneficiaries who are either unemployed, had casual employment work as domestic workers, taxi drivers, casual construction workers and vegetable vendors in Maseru.

***An example of a multi-stakeholder partnership helping the city know itself in new ways: Ghana Federation of Urban Poor (GHAFUP)*** is a network of groups in informal settlements working in eight regions in Ghana including in four of its largest urban agglomerations. In Accra, it includes People's Dialogue, affiliated with Slum Dwellers International, Homeless International (UK based), UN Habitat, American Jewish World Service, UN Women, Africa Adapt, Cities Alliance, and Accra Metropolitan Authority (AMA). A notable project was the publication of work that mapped, classified (according to age and level of services) and evaluated all informal settlements within the AMA area, a resource for the city's 2019 resilience plan undertaken as part of the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities initiative. The plan embraces informality's contributions to resilience building.

***An example of a UN agency-led project working globally and locally to address a growing issue:*** The UN's World Health Organization's Age-friendly Cities & Communities (AFCC) project fosters multi-stakeholder partnerships among local authorities, NGOs, local citizens, the private sector, professionals, researchers and

others to make their communities more inclusive and accessible particularly for the growing urban ageing populations (one of the 10 emerging themes from Habitat III). The WHO supports the AFCC Global Network composed of more than 900 cities that offers a framework and accreditation process for age-friendly places, technical support including tools and step-by-step guidelines and hosts an open source database of best practices. Of note: While there are now nearly 900 cities in the network, none are in Africa.

### 3. Recommendations for local and regional governments

While the principles and examples of partnerships discussed above and elsewhere represent important efforts, they are just the beginning. Together, we need to call for and co-produce a new generation of smarter partnerships that use the power of coalitions to drive change locally.

In short, we need a Phase Two of locally based multi-stakeholder partnerships, which starts by reinforcing local capacity building, in and with cities. To get started, here are some ideas that local and regional governments can consider:

- Build and demonstrate acceptance that multi-stakeholder partnerships are your way of doing business but also show that leadership matters
  - As leaders, mayors, governors, council representatives need to consult, listen and absorb information, data, solutions etc. so that together they will be able to articulate the large vision around which multi-stakeholder partnerships can work; be mindful that such a vision should be able to prevail beyond an electoral cycle because sustainable urban development takes decades to achieve
  - Assess areas where multi-stakeholder partnerships have a high likelihood of contributing to the vision particularly in finding quicker simpler signs of improvements demonstrating the effectiveness of the partnership. Some might be (this list to be amended at the town hall discussion):
    - Blend expert-generated and local knowledge in analyzing, diagnosing current conditions and developing and implementing solutions
    - Seek integrated approaches to urban issues – e.g. housing, transportation and education might be treated together
    - Develop imaginative (or simple enforcement of) financing solutions for projects (e.g. bundle several, work on municipal “bankability,” strengthen local revenue generation)
    - Look for efficiencies in equitable procurement policies
    - Adopt a universal design approach ensuring that decisions will be applicable to all
- Learn from the success AND failures of past experiences with multi-stakeholder partnerships. Be sure to attend to the six principles proposed in Section 2. Also share your experiences in international, national and regional arenas.

- Recognize that context matters i.e. while key patterns may exist, the formulation multi-stakeholder partnerships, the programs and policies that are to be pursued need to pass the test that they are fit for purpose

#### 4. Enabling environments for local action

Here are some suggested action items to begin to detail the recommendations above:

**Action One:** Recognize the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships by creating enabling environments that foster their creation; such environments include identifying and convening participants from representative constituencies at the beginning of a specific effort related to sustainable urban development and carrying the convenings through to implementation and evaluation.

**Action Two:** Find or dedicate resources to providing staff to support coordination of multi-stakeholder partnerships; include communications programs for conveying information in applicable and accessible languages and for real outreach efforts;

**Action Three:** Establish a jointly arrived at simple process and ground rules to guide multi-stakeholder Partnerships – these may include time limits, accountability measures, transparency conditions, dispute resolution mechanisms

#### 5. Joint way forward

**Step One:** Select a topic in your jurisdiction for which a multi-stakeholder partnership might be appropriate that has emerged from discussions with local constituencies; start small; pick “low- hanging fruit” with achievable goals developed through engagement of a broad number of allies; observe the principles outlined in Section 2.

**Step Two:** Pilot the effort; be patient, it takes time to develop trust (local leaders know that) but the trick is to have an inclusive and persuasive vision, one that endures over a longer time than an electoral term because, to repeat, sustainable urban development takes decades to achieve.

**Step Three:** Evaluate and expand the approach to other areas in order to adopt it as customary practice.

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