



**URBAN
SH/FT**

TRANSFORMING CITIES FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET

**Annual Report
2024–2025**

UrbanShift supports cities around the world to adopt integrated approaches to urban development, building an equitable, zero-carbon future where both people and planet can thrive. Funded by the Global Environment Facility and led by the UN Environment Programme, UrbanShift is implemented in partnership with the World Resources Institute, C40 Cities, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, the UN Development Programme, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

CONTENTS

- 1 FOREWORD..... 4
- 2 INTRODUCTION 6
 - The Potential of Cities 8
 - 5 Years of Impact by the Numbers 10
 - Cities Leading the Way..... 12
 - Gender & Inclusion 14
 - Year in Review 16
 - What's Next for UrbanShift? 18
- 3 LOCAL PROJECTS 20
 - Argentina 22
 - Brazil 26
 - Costa Rica 30
 - Morocco..... 34
 - Rwanda 38
 - Sierra Leone 42
 - India..... 46
 - China 50
 - Indonesia..... 54
- 4 GLOBAL PLATFORM 58
- 5 MONITORING & EVALUATION 90
- 6 5 YEARS, 5 LESSONS..... 104
- 7 GLOSSARY 106
- 8 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 107
- 9 ANNEX..... 108



FOREWORD



CLAUDE GASCON

*Director, Strategy and Operations,
Global Environment Facility Secretariat*

Cities remain at the heart of the global response to the interconnected crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. They are where the impacts of these challenges are most acutely felt, but also where some of the most transformative solutions are being implemented.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has long recognized the pivotal role of cities. Through the GEF-7 Sustainable Cities Impact Program (SCIP), UrbanShift, we are supporting cities to advance integrated approaches that unite climate action, biodiversity conservation and inclusive urban planning, and to develop innovative governance and financing models to enable these solutions on the ground. This work is helping cities move beyond siloed responses, address systemic challenges and seize opportunities for lasting transformation.

The past year has shown remarkable progress. More than 50 cities in 17 countries in GEF-6 and GEF-7 are already benefitting from GEF funding and technical support to advance a range of innovative solutions, from circular economy initiatives to nature-based climate resilience. Through our global platform, UrbanShift provides vital opportunities for cities to exchange knowledge, strengthen capacity and design solutions that attract large-scale financing.

Finance is a critical enabler for this transformation. The investment gap for net-zero, nature-positive and pollution-free cities is enormous, and cannot be closed without new approaches, stronger collaboration across sectors, and the engagement of the private sector. UrbanShift is proactively addressing this challenge. By equipping city leaders with tools to structure bankable projects, linking municipalities with investors and exploring policy solutions to overcome barriers, the program is helping cities move from ambition to implementation.

Momentum is accelerating for the GEF's Sustainable Cities program. Under the new GEF-8 cycle, nearly 50 cities in 20 countries will receive grant financing of nearly USD170 million, leveraging USD1.9 billion in expected co-financing. This expansion reflects growing recognition of the central role cities must play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. These resources will help cities implement transformative projects that align climate action with biodiversity conservation, pollution reduction, sustainable urban growth and enhanced quality of life for residents.

Cities must be equipped not only with financial resources, but also with governance frameworks, policy coherence and strong multi-level collaboration to ensure lasting impact. UrbanShift's unique combination of on-the-ground investment, global knowledge exchange and cross-sector partnerships is creating an enabling environment for cities to thrive—and for transformative change to take root and scale.

At the GEF, we are proud to be part of this journey, and remain committed to supporting cities as they unlock their potential to deliver on global goals and create vibrant, livable, and resilient futures for all.



MARTIN KRAUSE

*Director of the Climate Change Division,
UN Environment Programme*

Five years ago, when UrbanShift was launched, the idea of cities as engines of climate ambition was still emerging. Today, that vision has become reality. At recent global negotiations—from the Climate COP to the Biodiversity COP—cities have stood at the forefront, proving that local action is not only possible but powerful. The momentum for urban transformation has never been stronger, and it is reshaping the way the world responds to climate change.

Yet this surge of leadership faces a persistent challenge: Cities lack the technical capacities and financial resources to match their ambition. UrbanShift was created to bridge this gap. Over the past five years, the program has equipped city leaders and practitioners with the tools, knowledge, and partnerships needed to turn plans into action. From capacity-building and governance to finance and implementation, UrbanShift has built a global platform that empowers cities to lead the transition toward integrated, sustainable development.

This year's UrbanShift Africa Forum in Nairobi captured the essence of this mission. It was more than a meeting—it was a movement. The Forum amplified the call for greater investment in cities while fostering practical learning through

City Academies and peer-to-peer exchanges. Collectively, the Forum mobilized the voices of urban practitioners and leaders to accelerate transformations and actions to improve livelihoods and resilience across the continent.

The impact of UrbanShift is visible in the numbers, but its true value lies in the transformation it has enabled. Teresina, Brazil, inspired by Barranquilla, created its first rain garden and launched an afforestation plan; Freetown is exploring cable car systems after learning from Medellín; and Marrakech is mapping its greenspaces to protect biodiversity. Across continents, cities are innovating, collaborating, and inspiring one another. Thousands of practitioners have gained new skills, hundreds of cities have engaged in integrated planning, and projects have advanced toward finance and implementation. These achievements are not just milestones—they are stepping stones toward a future where cities are resilient, livable, and inclusive.

As the world races to keep the 1.5°C target within reach, the role of cities is more critical than ever. UrbanShift has shown what is possible when ambition meets support. As we close this chapter and look toward GEF-8 and beyond, the call is clear: let us build on this momentum, deepen partnerships, and accelerate innovation. Together, we can create cities where people and nature thrive—and where local action drives global change.

INTRODUCTION



UrbanShift is part of the largest sustainable cities funded program in the world, with:

- \$161 million in total Global Environment Facility program funding for the GEF-7 cycle
- \$1.93 billion of co-financing for low-carbon, nature-positive, resilient and inclusive urban actions
- Equal to a 12x grant to co-finance leverage ratio

Over the past five years, UrbanShift has pursued an impactful dual approach to advancing integrated urban planning. Through on-the-ground engagement with cities (see chapter 3, “Local Projects,” page 20), UrbanShift has directly supported 23 cities across nine countries to pursue innovative and transformative mitigation and adaptation projects. Our broad capacity-building offer (see chapter 4, “Global Platform,” page 58), built around eight essential focus areas, has instilled best practices for creating sustainable, equitable and livable cities among a broad cohort of urban practitioners.



THE POTENTIAL OF CITIES



By 2050, 75% of the world's population will live in cities



Investing in climate-resilient infrastructure can achieve a 4:1 return on investment



9 billion people stand to benefit from adopting integrated and sustainable urban development approaches

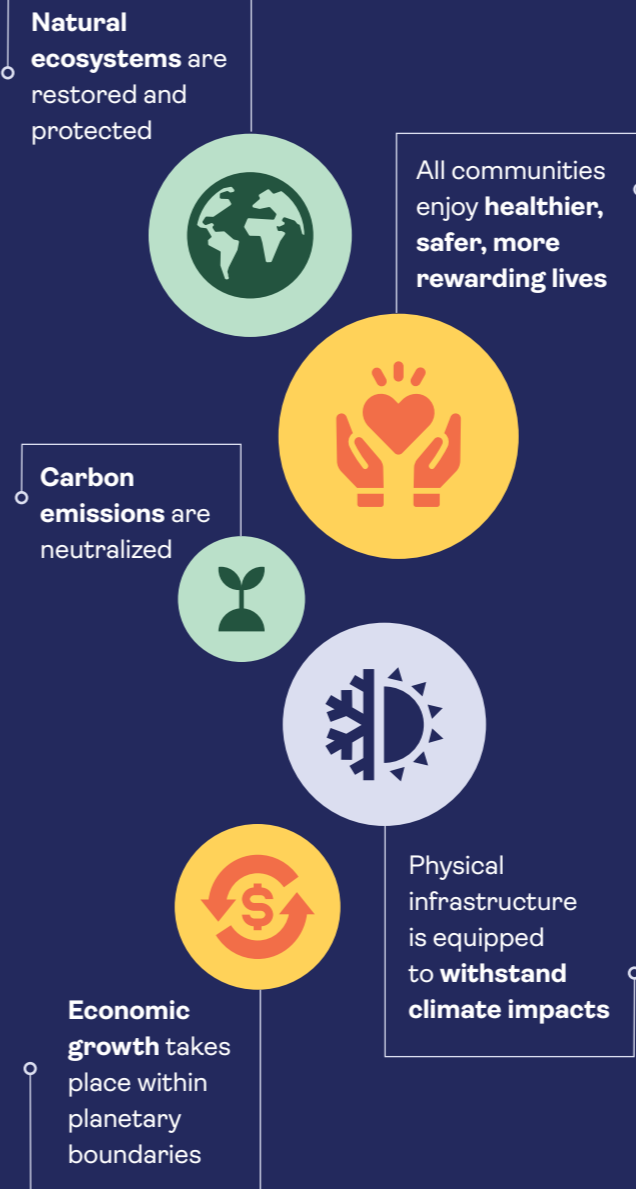


1.6 billion people living in ~1,000 cities will face regular, extreme heatwaves in less than 30 years



75% of the urban infrastructure needed by 2050 has yet to be built

Together with its network of cities and partners, UrbanShift envisions a world of vibrant and equitable cities where:



OUR MISSION

Transforming cities for people and the planet through integrated approaches to urban development

OUR VISION

Fostering a movement of cities to lead the transition toward a resilient, inclusive, zero-carbon urban future

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



GOAL 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



GOAL 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all



GOAL 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all



GOAL 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation



GOAL 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable



GOAL 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts



GOAL 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss

5 YEARS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

After five years of implementation, UrbanShift has accumulated an array of results across the project development pipeline, from upstream capacity building to downstream finance and implementation. Here is a snapshot of some of those results:

CITY IMPACTS

Inspired by a Peer-to-Peer Exchange with Barranquilla, Teresina, Brazil created the city's first-ever rain garden and a citywide afforestation plan (read more on page 28).

Following a study tour of Medellin's cable car system, momentum has built across Sierra Leone for Freetown to explore a similar approach to equitable transportation (read more on page 44).

CAPACITY BUILDING AND LEARNING REACH

>90
capacity building events

>7,500
people (42% female) reached through in-person and virtual events

1,028
speakers & panelists (45% female)

8
free, self-paced, online courses published on the UrbanShift website

5,800
learners enrolled (69% female) in UrbanShift's online courses

95
unique resources on sustainable and integrated urban development and planning available in the UrbanShift resource library

CITY IMPACTS

With the guidance from the UrbanShift Geospatial Data Lab, Marrakech has mapped its urban greenspace and developed a plan for preserving and expanding biodiversity (read more on page 36).

Kigali is completing restoration and rehabilitation of five urban wetlands to support resilience and quality of life (read more on page 40)

Chengdu is accelerating its efforts to become a "Park City" by establishing the world's largest network of greenways.

POLICY, PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

7
urban climate action plans supported¹

10
cities² have undertaken sustainable integrated planning based on their participation in UrbanShift Global Platform events

4
cities³ have incorporated gender-sensitive approaches into urban planning and climate resilience

50
best practices and lessons learned shared between cities

13
new resolutions and/or commitments made by policy makers, cities and other urban actors to promote sustainable integrated urban planning and investments

CITY IMPACTS

Chennai has restored Kadappakam Lake to enhance the city's resilience to flooding and provide recreational opportunities for residents (read more on page 48).

ENGAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE

27
advocacy events

36⁴
cities engaged

27
Partnership Engagement Group members

>8,400
newsletter subscribers

335,000+
website users/views

FINANCE

14
projects approved into the Transformative Actions Program pipeline, which unlocks additional technical support and access to finance from project preparation facilities and financial partners

5
projects in 4 cities⁵ have accessed finance opportunities through UrbanShift

18
integrated investment projects in UrbanShift cities identified

9
cities have received light-touch technical assistance to improve the financial readiness of their projects

CITIES LEADING THE WAY

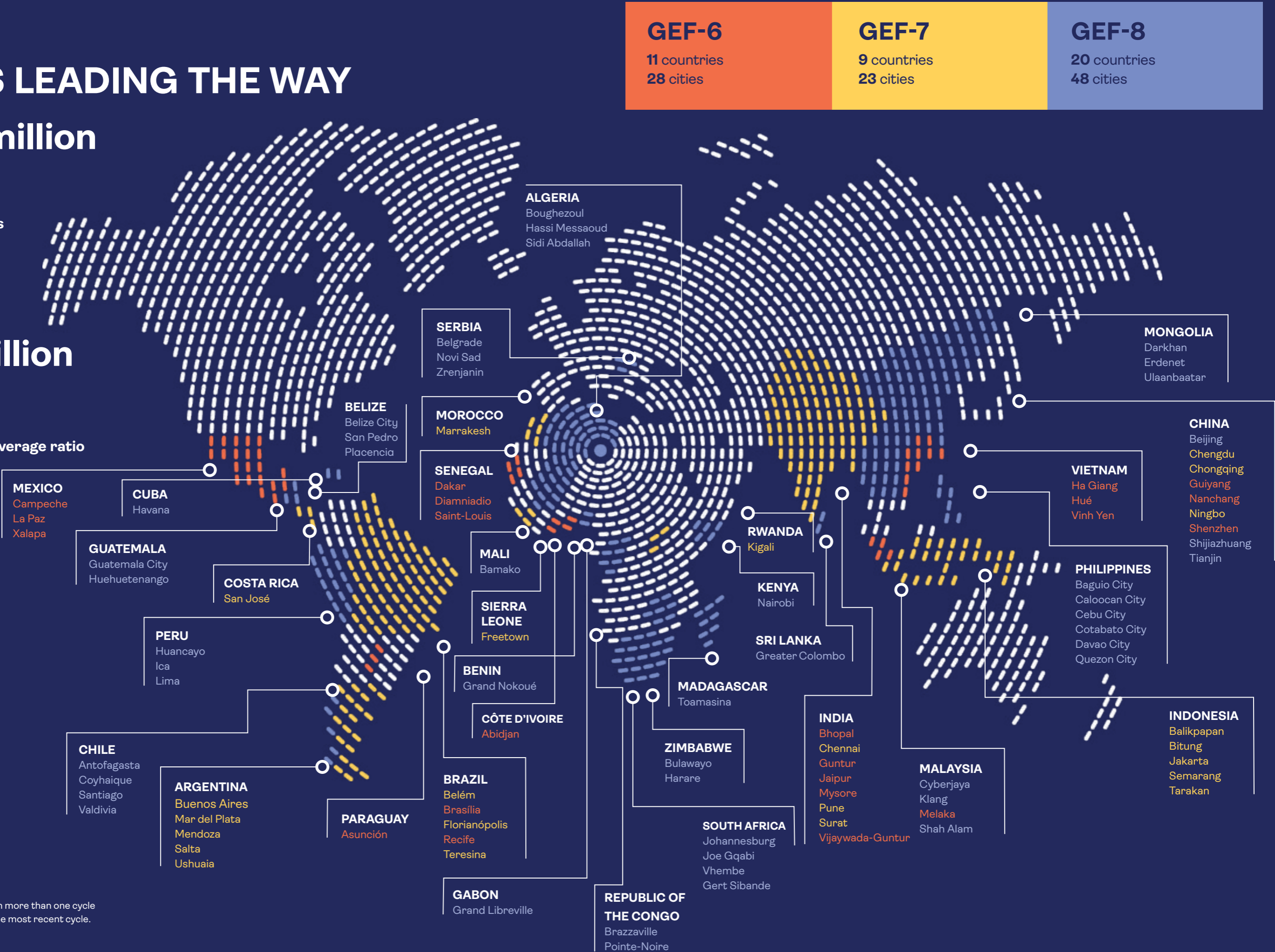
\$436million
in grant funding

33 countries

93 cities

\$5.9billion
of co-financing

13.5:1 leverage ratio



Countries participating in more than one cycle are listed according to the most recent cycle.

WOMEN SHAPING RESILIENT CITIES: VOICES FROM FEMALE URBAN PRACTITIONERS IN ARGENTINA, BRAZIL AND INDIA

Across the world, women have historically been excluded from decisions about how cities are planned, financed and built. Fewer than 5 percent of city leadership roles and 10 percent of top positions at leading architecture firms are held by women.

This exclusion weakens resilience: Urban systems designed without women’s perspectives often fail to address the safety, mobility, health and livelihoods of half the population. In the face of climate change, where floods, heatwaves and displacement disproportionately affect women and girls, the absence of female voices in planning and decision-making processes is more than a gap; it is a risk. As Emma Miloyo, first female President of the Architectural Association of Kenya, observed during an UrbanShift’s August 2022 [webinar on what cities would look like if they were designed by women](#): “The first challenge is no role models ... the ‘mold’ girls grow up seeing is a male mold.”

UrbanShift is working to change this by amplifying the leadership of women who are shaping sustainable, inclusive and climate-resilient cities. This year, we highlight three inspiring practitioners who have been active leaders in UrbanShift activities: Dr. Nisha Priya, a nature-based solutions specialist from Chennai, India; Cibelee Assmann, the Urban Innovation Manager for Florianópolis, Brazil; and María José Leveratto, the Urban Planning Coordinator of the GEF-7 Sustainable Cities Project in Argentina. Each has navigated challenges in male-dominated fields, carved out new spaces for women’s leadership and brought forward solutions that make cities more livable for everyone.

JOURNEYS INTO URBAN CLIMATE RESILIENCE

For all three women, the path to urban climate work began with conviction and persistence. Nisha transformed her passion for nature into a career in environmental science and climate policy. “My love for nature led me to study environmental science,” she said, “and later to apply that knowledge to solve real-world problems.” María José harnessed motivation from her drive to overcome adversity and skepticism. “When I began, environmental issues in urban design were considered distant and irrelevant,” she said. “That adversity strengthened me as a promoter of sustainability in architecture and urbanism.” When Cibelee started out in the Florianópolis city government over 22 years ago, the absence of female role models meant she had to “pave my own way,” she said, “but that experience deepened my commitment to be a reference for other women.”



Dr. Nisha Priya



María José Leveratto

SOLUTIONS

Each practitioner has seen firsthand how climate risks manifest along gender lines.

“Women experience climate risks with greater vulnerability because they have fewer resources and more responsibilities,” said Cibelee. Nisha observed this reality during the 2019 drought in Chennai, when the city ran precariously close to running out of water. “At least 90 percent of those waiting for water on the streets were women,” she said. “They felt it was their responsibility to secure water for their families.”

Now, they are able to lead on projects that materially improve conditions for women and girls in cities. In Argentina, María José helped lead a microcredit program that empowered women to improve their homes with insulated roofs, completed walls and rainwater cisterns—without collateral. “As months passed and improvements were completed, many of the women paid their installments in advance. Their new role as administrators and providers empowered them and made them more visible within the community.”

In Chennai, during the Sembakkam Lake restoration project, Nisha recalled that “after we cleared the weeds and rubbish, the first thing I saw was a young woman walking alone around the lake.” Brimming with excitement, Nisha approached the woman and explained the restoration efforts. The woman responded that this was the first time in 18 or 19 years that she was able to take this walk and actually see the water in the lake. For Nisha, this experience instilled in her the importance of embedding gender considerations into all projects. “What began as an environmental project became a safe public space and a catalyst for community pride,” she said.

Together, their experiences underline a shared lesson: gender equity in cities must be considered a central component of resilience for all urban projects.

WHY WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP MATTERS

In urban planning, women leaders contribute essential skills in empathy, collaboration and systems thinking. “Women bring a perspective of care—towards families, communities and the environment,” Cibelee explained. Women often “approach work with a holistic perspective,” said María José, “and are able to manage many things at once and seek comprehensive solutions for complex problems.”

All three women leaders are playing an active role in closing the gender gaps in urban planning and city leadership. “At first, leadership spaces weren’t open



Cibelee Assmann

to women,” Cibelee said. “I had to fight, negotiate and sometimes yield—but never stop advancing.”

CENTERING WOMEN AND GIRLS IN URBAN SOLUTIONS

To truly achieve equity, gender considerations must be embedded across urban policy, finance and planning. In Chennai, a city that suffers with extreme urban heat, Nisha is advocating that “infrastructure for climate adaptation—such as shade, cooling, and other safety measures—be designed so that it protects women vendors and empowers them economically.”

To facilitate gender equity in cities, project design and engagement must be built to incorporate women’s perspectives. “Equity requires participation to be truly accessible and designed around women’s real lives,” said Cibelee. By ensuring that women’s voices and needs are truly represented, María José said, urban projects can evolve to “bridge the gap between technical planning and social justice.”

While barriers to truly equitable representation and participation still stand, the tide is beginning to change. “Around the world, we see more women leading in urban planning and climate governance,” said María José. “Women are no longer asking for permission to lead—they are already leading.”

Urban resilience cannot be achieved without gender equity. By elevating the voices of leaders like Nisha, Cibelee, and María José, cities can unlock solutions that are not only more inclusive but also more effective. UrbanShift is proud to stand with these women, and with all those across our network proving every day that resilient cities are women’s cities.

YEAR IN REVIEW

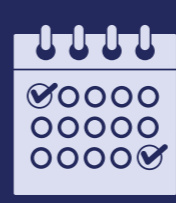
The final year of the UrbanShift Global Platform focused on advancing urban climate action through capacity-building and peer learning. UrbanShift supported cities with finance academies in Accra and Ahmedabad, deepened technical knowledge through geospatial planning labs in Puducherry and Bitung and convened key national dialogues across Africa, Asia and Latin America. This period also featured UrbanShift’s presence at global forums including COP16 in Cali and the World Urban Forum in Cairo, alongside a series of webinars and virtual trainings focused on climate hazards, nature-based solutions, and multi-level governance.

**Webinar**

**Virtual event**

**Local project**

**In-person event**



35
EVENTS



2,979
PEOPLE REACHED



46%
WOMEN PARTICIPANTS

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE URBANSHIFT NETWORK?

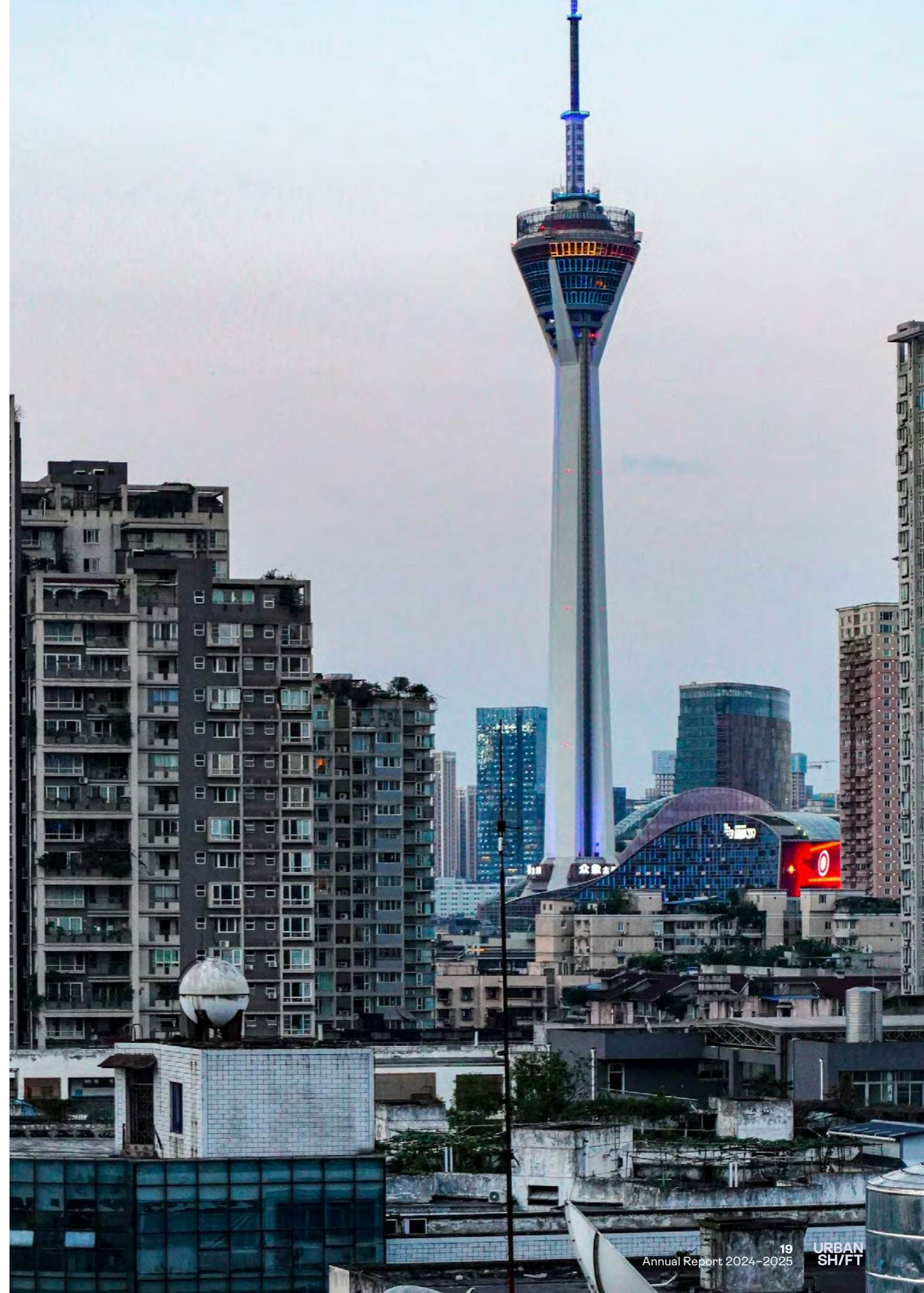
In the GEF-8 cycle, the Sustainable Cities Integrated Program (SCIP) aims to build on the successes of UrbanShift and continue to support integrated urban planning with a cohort of 20 countries and almost 50 cities. This brings the total program portfolio to 33 countries and over 90 cities. Spanning across Africa, Central and South America, Asia, and Eastern Europe, the GEF-8 SCIP includes a wide diversity of countries – from least developed to newly industrialized to small island developing states – and will continue to address environmental degradation drivers and urbanization pressures to build net-zero, nature-positive, inclusive, and climate resilient cities.

GEF-8 SCIP adds another 169 million USD of GEF grants dedicated to sustainable urbanization and will be led globally by the World Bank in collaboration with eight other accredited GEF implementing agencies that will lead the country projects. The World Bank and partners will utilize the Global Platform for Sustainable Cities (GPSC) that was created in GEF-6 and leverage the work of UrbanShift to integrate the three phases (GEF-6, GEF-7 and GEF-8), with joint activities to expand opportunities to cities. In GEF-8, three new GEF agencies are joining the Sustainable Cities family; FAO brings its expertise on food and agriculture in the urban context, IUCN will strengthen the program's work on urban nature and critical ecosystem services for cities,

and BOAD joins the cohort of participating multilateral development banks with its rich experience from the West African region.

UrbanShift's core partners—UNEP, C40, ICLEI and WRI—will support the implementation of the global platform in GEF-8 to ensure continuity and bring along all of the valuable learnings from the past five years of progressive work with cities. UNEP will also directly support Kenya and Sri Lanka in the next phase of the program. GEF-8 will further expand the partnership and broaden the engagement with new international organizations, financial institutions, the private sector, academia, and civil society organizations – focusing on developing innovative and inclusive sustainability solutions, enhancing access to finance, and strengthening local institutional capacity.

In GEF-8, SCIP will focus on three interconnected core themes – i) promoting nature-positive and resilient urban development through nature-based and biodiversity solutions; ii) advancing decarbonization of urban infrastructure; and iii) enhancing circularity. These efforts will be advanced at the systems level by cross-cutting support to strengthen urban governance, improve municipal finance and private sector engagement, foster demand for innovation, leverage multi-stakeholder partnerships, and expand knowledge by co-developing tools and good practices.



LOCAL PROJECTS



Over the past five years, UrbanShift has worked directly with 23 cities across nine countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America to deeply understand their challenges and co-develop responsive solutions that address local needs and inspire global progress. There has never been a more urgent time for cities to act. As climate change accelerates and cities—especially the most vulnerable residents—bear the disproportionate burden of impact, urban areas have the potential to innovate and invest in transformative, sustainable solutions. While progress on our most pressing urban issues, from climate change to inequity, is never linear and has been met with challenges over the past five years, the cities within the UrbanShift network have made steadfast progress toward their goals, which we are honored to share.



ARGENTINA

Argentina is one of the largest and most urbanized countries in South America.

With a population of 45.4 million people, 92% of whom live in urban areas, the country faces the pressures of development while striving to preserve its unique biodiversity. With five cities—Buenos Aires, Mar del Plata, Mendoza, Salta and Ushuaia—UrbanShift supports strategies to foster green growth, reduce GHG emissions and land degradation, and conserve biodiversity. By balancing near-term priorities, such as sustainable mobility corridors, with long-term visions for urban growth, the project is laying a pathway toward sustainability in Argentine cities.

PARTICIPATION IN KEY URBANSHIFT ACTIVITIES

● July 2025
| 2nd National-Local Dialogue

Project Budget
\$207.5 Million
GEF Grant: \$23,447,236
Co-finance: \$183,575,335

Implemented by
UNEP

Executed by
National Subsecretariat of Environment
(formerly Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development)

PROGRESS ON GENDER INCLUSION

The project in Argentina has mainstreamed gender considerations into its planning and participation activities. National-local dialogues promoted balanced participation of women and men in technical and decision-making roles. Over the course of the project, a total of 1,550 participants engaged in workshops and project activities, of which 806 were women and 744 were men. These activities ensured gender-balanced representation in training and consultations, laying the foundation for equitable participation in urban sustainability and climate resilience initiatives.



“The project in Argentina has focused on incorporating gender analysis into technical training opportunities provided

by the UrbanShift initiative, such as the Geospatial Analysis Lab in Ushuaia in 2023, where national and local actors discussed the sustainable development of the city. The event highlighted the role of women technicians and decision-makers, and applied a gender analysis to the data.

LOANA VEGA,
TASK MANAGER,
UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

BUENOS AIRES

Population: 13.6 million

In Argentina's capital and largest city, UrbanShift is supporting Buenos Aires to address its challenges with air quality and traffic congestion through an overarching strategic vision for a network of low-emission, green corridors throughout the city to support health, quality of life and biodiversity.

MAR DEL PLATA

Population: 628,560

As this popular seaside resort city grapples with high numbers of visitors, UrbanShift is working with Mar del Plata to develop a sustainable tourism plan for 2050 that ensures long-term environmental and urban sustainability through an integrated approach, with a special focus on the nearby Mar Chiquita Biosphere Reserve (read more on the following page).

MENDOZA

Population: 1 million

As this western city's population booms, development is encroaching on the surrounding Andean ecosystem. To help Mendoza balance growth with sustainability, UrbanShift has strengthened the city's use of geospatial data to balance growth and ecosystem conservation.

SALTA

Population: 617,183

Facing rapid population growth, this warm, dry city located within the mountainous Yungas Biosphere Reserve aims to upgrade its urban infrastructure—particularly transit—to accommodate new demand. UrbanShift is working with Salta to develop a system of transit-oriented, low-emission green corridors to promote public and non-motorized transport, ecological connectivity and improved resource management.

USHUAIA

Population: 82,615

Known as the world's southernmost city, Ushuaia's cold climate and relatively small population have precluded sustainable urban planning approaches, like dense housing and public transportation. As the city grows and tourism rises, UrbanShift is working with Ushuaia on a “Sustainable Ushuaia 2050” strategic plan to steer the city toward a more resilient, future-oriented path.



“The participation of technical representatives and municipal officials in UrbanShift

events has been key to strengthening understanding of the objectives and priorities of the GEF-7 project. Although the project has faced barriers to implementation, the positive impact of the program is evident: Teamwork has been strengthened, objectives and priorities have been refined, we have established links with other actors and cities, and we've been able to facilitate and sustain subsequent exchanges with national teams.

MARÍA SOL PÉREZ HARGUINDEGUY,
COORDINATOR GENERAL FOR THE
GEF-7 SUSTAINABLE CITIES PROJECT,
NATIONAL UNDERSECRETARIAT OF THE
ENVIRONMENT





Visions of Sustainability in Mar del Plata and Mar Chiquita

Underneath and around the province of Buenos Aires’ thriving metropolitan areas are complex, diverse, and severely threatened natural ecosystems. As the region’s metropolitan areas continue to grow, the UrbanShift project in Argentina is working with cities to strike a delicate balance between urban development and natural resource conservation.

Two projects unfolding in Mar del Plata and Mar Chiquita—two distinct but interconnected territories in the province of Buenos Aires—are showing how cities and regions can thoughtfully integrate conservation, sustainable development, and climate adaptation goals through transformative design efforts.

The unique coastal lagoon of Mar Chiquita has seen a dramatic increase in tourism as visitors flock to experience the region’s unique biodiversity. In response, local leaders launched a planning process for a new environmentally sustainable Centro de Interpretación Ambiental (Environmental Interpretation Center) for Mar Chiquita. Equipped with photovoltaic panels to power the structure, a rainwater harvesting system, and an elevated design to preserve the natural continuity of flora and fauna, the building will be a model of climate-adaptive construction and reflect community-driven environmental guidance. All told, the building’s innovative and resource-sensitive approach is estimated to reduce energy consumption by 33%, water use by 51%,

and embedded energy in materials by 68% compared to local building standards—and achieve a green premium payback in just 2.4 years. Alongside these benefits, the center will serve as a hub for education, community engagement, and ongoing environmental management for years to come.

Around 35 kilometers south of Mar Chiquita lies Mar del Plata, Argentina’s fifth-largest city. Known for its 16 kilometers of sandy beaches, Mar del Plata’s population swells from 650,000 to 1.2 million from tourism in the summer months.

Recognizing the strain this influx places on its natural ecosystems, the UrbanShift project in Argentina worked with Mar del Plata to create a Comprehensive Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Conservation Plan. This ambitious plan identifies key conservation areas, designs ecological corridors, and promotes sustainable land use practices. “Rather than seeing conservation and urban growth as opposing forces, we worked to integrate biodiversity into urban development models,” explained Laura Zulaica, researcher at CONICET (National Scientific and Technical Research Council), and lead coordinator of the plan.

The plan, developed through an intensive participatory process, spans four key action areas: prioritizing natural resources, creating a green network, sustainable agroecology, and ongoing education and engagement. Across these four pillars, the project team developed 16 specific programs and 53 projects—many with the potential for immediate implementation.

As Argentina aims to integrate biodiversity, climate, and sustainability goals into urban policy, “these projects show how national policy goals can translate into real tools for cities,” said José Vera Bahima, an Argentina project team member from the Subsecretaría de Ambiente. The UrbanShift project in Argentina is not just about infrastructure or plans—it is about transforming how cities grow and relate to nature. Mar del Plata and Mar Chiquita provide concrete, locally grounded examples of this transformation, showcasing how participatory design, ecological science, and institutional coordination can deliver climate-resilient, inclusive outcomes.



BRAZIL

Brazil is the most biologically diverse country on the planet and the sixth most populous. Of its 212 million inhabitants, 87% reside in urban areas.

Over the past five years, UrbanShift, through its country project CITinova II, has worked with Belém, Florianópolis and Teresina to develop strategies to reduce GHG emissions, conserve biodiversity, bolster resilience and improve quality of life for all residents. By emphasizing data-informed planning and integrated approaches, UrbanShift is helping to foster a collaborative, accelerated approach to resilient urban development in the country.



Project Budget \$197.34 Million

GEF Grant: \$12,552,440
Co-finance: \$184,789,243



Implemented by UNEP



Executed by Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MCTI)



“UrbanShift’s contributions have been critical in setting the stage for engagement and collaboration.”

This past year, the National Dialogue held in Teresina played a pivotal role in strengthening the project's focus on actions to improve metropolitan governance. The event provided technical guidance and a collaborative space for relevant stakeholders to co-design workplans and engagement strategies to operationalize the metropolitan governance structures during the project.

LUIZA SCHMIDT,
GEF MITIGATION PROJECTS SPECIALIST,
UNEP CLIMATE CHANGE DIVISION

PARTICIPATION IN KEY URBANSHIFT ACTIVITIES

- **June 2025**
2nd Brazil National Dialogue in Teresina, Brazil
- **September 2025**
CiBiX Workshop in Teresina, Brazil



PROGRESS ON GENDER INCLUSION

The CITinova II project has focused on incorporating gender-sensitive considerations into all project plans. Teresina has secured United Nations funding to pursue a study on the impacts of extreme heat on pregnant women. In Florianópolis, a predominantly female technical team in the planning department is encouraging adoption of a care-centered lens for district-level plans, which integrate perspectives from women, children, and the elderly into the city's physical layout.



“UrbanShift activities—such as the City and Finance Academies—helped build trust among focal points and partners, creating the momentum and shared understanding necessary to move forward. These early efforts laid the groundwork for more structured collaboration and created a cohesive sense of purpose among participating institutions.”

DAVID PEIXOTO,
NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE CITINOVA PROJECT,
MCTI



BELÉM

Population: 2.5 million

Belém has been at the center of the global climate agenda over the past year as the host of COP30. Aligned with this opportunity, UrbanShift has been supporting the city to implement a range of resilience measures, from incorporating green infrastructure into previously concretized areas and enhancing public and sustainable transportation systems.



FLORIANÓPOLIS

Population: 1.2 million

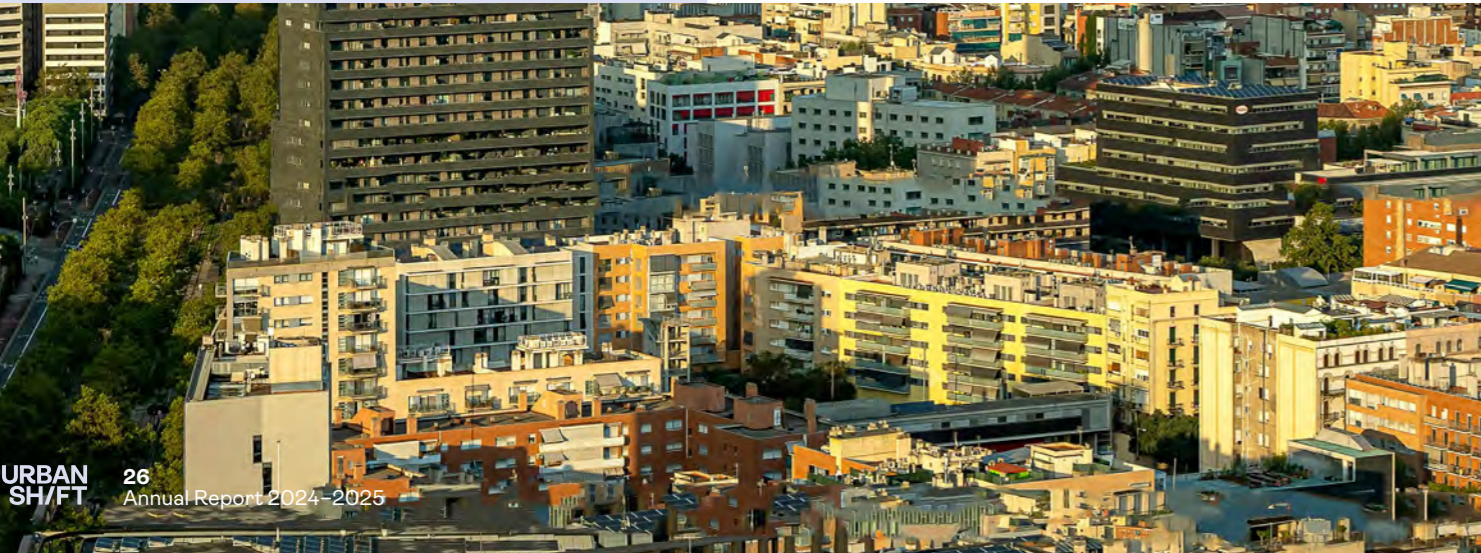
In Florianópolis, UrbanShift has helped strengthen the city's approach to sustainable development, which achieved a major milestone in the last year with the signing of a long-awaited agreement with the federal government to implement a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, which includes fleet electrification. "UrbanShift's work helped both in the overall development of the project, and specifically in this event that took place that worked on this issue of collective modes and electrification," said urban planner Cibele Assmann.



TERESINA

Population: 1.2 million

Teresina has embarked on a wide range of initiatives over the course of its engagement with UrbanShift. After participating in UrbanShift's Finance Academies, the municipality began developing a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) program, designed to mobilize financial mechanisms for green and climate-resilient urban interventions, as well as a pilot project for electric buses, developed in partnership with GIZ (read more about Teresina's efforts on the following page.)





How Teresina Is Accelerating Its Transition to a Green and Resilient City

In 2024, in Teresina's Lagoa do Mazerine, a linear park not far from the airport, a new garden opened to the public. For the community around the park, the new green space is a respite from the paved cityscape and the nearby industrial activity. But the garden's purpose is even deeper than that. Designed as a rain garden, this green space absorbs excess water during downpours, chipping away at the region's growing flood risk.

Teresina is the capital of Piauí, one of the most climate- and economically vulnerable states in Brazil. But the city is wasting no time responding to the climate crisis. Teresina's 2030 Agenda aims to align its policies with the climate goals laid out by the Paris Agreement and to build climate resilience across the city, particularly for the most vulnerable residents.

Leonardo Madeira Martins coordinates the 2030 Agenda for Teresina. Martins is responsible for leading a team to generate and implement ideas for how Teresina can strengthen its climate action policies, and how it can bring these ideas to local, national, and international partners for support. "For Teresina, the training component of the UrbanShift platform was extremely important," Martins said. "Whenever we had an opportunity to participate in a training,

we always shared our learnings back with the team and developed working groups around how to implement them."

One of those ideas was the rain garden. In July of 2023, Martins and some of his colleagues from Teresina traveled to Barranquilla, Colombia as part of an UrbanShift Peer-to-Peer Exchange on urban nature-based solutions. Exploring Barranquilla's award-winning Todos al Parque (Everyone to the Park) program, which ensures 93% of households can walk to a park or green space in eight minutes or less, gave the Teresina delegation some ideas. Not only do Barranquilla's parks improve quality of life for residents—they do double duty as climate resilience infrastructure that lowers temperatures and reduces flood risk. "At the time of this exchange with Barranquilla, we were working on a greening plan for Teresina," Martins said. "Todos al Parque greatly influenced how we developed the plan."

Alongside the greening plan, Teresina was also developing its overarching Climate Action Plan in 2023. Just weeks before the Barranquilla event, Martins had traveled to San José, Costa Rica to participate in an UrbanShift City Academy on Integrated Climate Action Planning. Working on the two plans simultaneously and with the insights

from the UrbanShift events, Martins said, enabled Teresina to ensure that plans were complementary of each other and oriented toward shared goals.

UrbanShift's partnership with Teresina will continue to shape the city and its resilience actions for years to come. Martins and his team are using the expertise they've gained through events like Finance Academies to pursue funding opportunities for Teresina. Recently, the city entered the [*Bloomberg Mayor's Challenge*](#) for an opportunity to reimagine its core service delivery. From a

Peer-to-Peer Exchange that Teresina joined in Rotterdam in September 2024, the city returned home with concepts for rooftop solar and greening approaches that they are aiming to scale up.

"Cities are all facing very difficult problems," Martins said. "What I've gathered from UrbanShift is that we don't need to tackle them alone." And when it comes to making tangible progress on climate action, "we can't be shy about asking for support or partnership," he said. "Cities are stronger when we act together."



COSTA RICA

Costa Rica has long been one of the world’s leading countries on environmental protection. As this biodiversity-rich country has urbanized, it’s facing challenges due to pollution and the intensifying effects of climate change.

In Costa Rica, UrbanShift has worked across the Metropolitan Area of San José (GAM), which comprises 31 municipalities, to support circular economy strategies and environmental restoration projects. With The Transitioning to a Green Urban Economy Project (TEVU), UrbanShift has accelerated approaches to finance and planning that will help ensure a green resilient future for the country.



Project Budget

GEF Grant: \$10,317,970
Co-finance: \$99,131,494



Implemented by

UNDP



Executed by

Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE), Organization for Tropical Studies

PARTICIPATION IN KEY URBANSHIFT ACTIVITIES

- **March 2024**
2nd National-Local Dialogue for Costa Rica in Barva, Costa Rica

TEVU PROJECT IMPACTS TO DATE



2,361
hectares

of urban land rehabilitated



2.1 million
tons

of CO₂ avoided through
reforestation and carbon
reduction efforts



SAN JOSÉ METROPOLITAN AREA

Population: 2.26 million

Highlights of UrbanShift’s support across the GAM include:

- In Alajuelita, the municipality has developed a suite of urban design guidelines to promote community safety, inclusion and livability. “This is a significant milestone because it transcends physical infrastructure, and focuses on social regeneration and citizen security as pillars of sustainable urban development,” said Alajuelita Mayor Rosario Siles Fernández (read more about community-led transformation in Alajuelita on the following page).
- Through a collective effort, Barva renovated its central park through the lens of best practices around nature-based solutions and urban biodiversity. “That was a very challenging project for the municipality,” said Barva Mayor Jorge Acuña Prado, “and UrbanShift offered collaboration and technical support on the selection of trees and vegetation for this project, which has had a big impact on the community.”
- Cartago completed construction on Bulevar 29 de Octubre—a green transport corridor with a bike path. “The boulevard helps us beautify the city, bring peace, and provide pedestrians with a space to meet and socialize,” said Cartago Mayor Mario Redondo Poveda.
- Santa Bárbara has implemented “Conexión Viva,” a strategy to promote pedestrian mobility, urban greening, traffic calming, and flood mitigation along the busy streets that lead residents to the main health center, with the goal of improving livability and addressing climate risks. “From the moment the project started, there was an opening up of a range of options for how we could solve community problems—for example, through nature-based solutions,” said Mario Loría, architect and city planner.
- San Rafael completed an ambitious effort to plant 36 trees around the municipality’s central church. “We removed the concrete from the ground, and have been able to realize multiple benefits for climate change mitigation, pedestrian experience and beautification,” said Marianela Rodríguez, environmental manager for San Rafael.
- Tibas is implementing an urban greening and flood mitigation strategy for the streets surrounding a busy medical clinic to improve livability and address climate risks. “Thanks to UrbanShift, we’re now looking to nature-based solutions to address challenges, where before we might have only tackled these issues with more traditional tools,” said Ingrid Sandoval Villalobos, the city’s environmental manager. “There’s been a real mindset shift.”



“A highlight for Costa Rica has been the many national and international trainings we have been able to participate in on nature-based solutions.”

The opportunity to bring municipal officials and technical staff abroad to learn from other places and share experiences has expanded our knowledge and strengthened our approach. These trainings have also helped us understand avenues for progress, like innovative financial instruments and public-private partnerships, that can expand our resources and accelerate our sustainability efforts.

ALBER MATA MORALES,
TEVU PROJECT

PROGRESS ON GENDER INCLUSION

Alongside efforts to ensure gender-inclusive approaches to designing and implementing local projects, the TEVU project has created a comprehensive framework, *The ABCs of Gender-Sensitive Interventions*, which establishes practical guidelines to ensure that reforestation and rehabilitation of urban public spaces are inclusive and safe for women and girls.



In Costa Rica’s Greater Metropolitan Area, a Community Transformed a Dump Site into a Thriving Green Space

In a bustling park at the heart of La Guapil, a community in Alajuelita, Costa Rica, children chase each other across soccer pitches and gather on nearby play structures. Around them, adults tend to the gardens and trees and tidy up the walking trails that encircle the park. Called La Sabanita, this park is the center of community life for La Guapil.

But just years ago, this three-hectare space along the Tiribí River looked very different. Garbage—glass bottles, diapers, plastics, and old appliances—piled under the sun and the rain. Pollution flowed into the nearby river and seeped into the environment. Children were told to keep away. "It was a place where people hid to commit crimes – full of mud, garbage, and dangers," said Maribel Gómez, a member of the La Guapil Community Development Association.

Gómez, though, would not let this stand. A community leader with a deep connection to nature, Gómez and some neighbors began, in 2019, to clean up the site. When the pandemic accelerated the need for safe, outdoor community gathering spaces, the TEVU project took note, and provided funding toward the effort.

"It was the power of the community’s heart that wanted a dignified and safe place to connect with nature," said TEVU’s project coordinator Miriam Miranda. "After the pandemic, green spaces and contact with nature became essential for people's health and well-being."

While small in scale, La Sabanita represents the kind of action that the global climate movement is increasingly recognizing as essential to meeting its goals: locally led, yet aligned with international priorities around nature-

based solutions, ecological regeneration, and pollution mitigation. With strong support from the Municipality of Alajuelita, the La Guapil project attracted funding and guidance from a broad range of organizations alongside TEVU, including the María Aguilar Interurban Biological Corridor (CBIMA) and the European Union’s INTERLACE urban ecosystem restoration project. Costa Rica’s private sector, especially Pedegral Corporation—a nearby company that oversees waste management, recycling, and construction manufacturing—also provided support.

With this diverse backing, the community got to work. Neighbors met to pick up trash, sort waste, and plant native saplings that could help restore the ecosystem and support wildlife. They also created spaces to socialize—clusters of benches and pergolas, an urban vegetable patch, and a pollinator garden. Alongside this grassroots effort, the TEVU project lent its expertise on architecture, landscaping, environmental engineering and civil engineering to rebuild the space.

"For me, this project is a dream. A lot of children come here to play and now, for the first time, we have this beautiful, clean, green space where they can play safely," Gómez said.

La Sabanita has changed life in La Guapil. But the community is not slowing down in its efforts. Now, Gómez says, the project is looking to extend its benefits to the surrounding ecosystems—namely, the Tiribí River, which has become choked with pollution. The TEVU project, in partnership with the community, is exploring how rehabilitating the wetland area around the river could help filter and clean the water, as pollution mitigation efforts continue in the park. This collaborative model for community-led rehabilitation is gaining momentum in La Guapil and showing how cities around the world can address environmental and social challenges in tandem, and create more livable communities for all.



Our engagement with UrbanShift—especially the finance support—has opened the eyes of a number of municipal leaders to see the variety of resources they can access to fund projects. Through UrbanShift, we secured USD 17,000 from C40 for an intervention in Alajuelita.

We’re also working with the Ford Foundation and French cooperation on a USD 800,000 proposal for waste co-processing systems. These resources have been instrumental in initiating progress in the municipalities.

MIRIAM MIRANDA,
TEVU PROJECT COORDINATOR,
ORGANIZATION FOR TROPICAL STUDIES



MOROCCO

Morocco, one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in North Africa, is already coping with extreme temperatures and water shortages. The country—the region’s third-largest economy—is taking a proactive approach to the climate crisis by establishing ambitious resilience goals, including a commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050.

In this context, UrbanShift is supporting the implementation of Marrakech, Ville Durable, a five-year program to promote integrated, resilient and sustainable urban development in the city. The program adopts a multisectoral approach grounded in innovative territorial and financial planning, the promotion of nature-based solutions and the deployment of low-carbon infrastructure across key sectors such as mobility, energy efficiency, waste management, biodiversity, urban greening and climate adaptation.

PARTICIPATION IN KEY URBANSHIFT ACTIVITIES

- **October 2024**
Clean Transport Finance Academy for African Cities in Accra, Ghana
- **November 2024**
Peer-to-Peer Exchange on Clean Air Zones in Madrid, Spain
- **February 2025**
Green & Resilient UrbanShift Africa Forum in Nairobi, Kenya
- **June 2025**
First National-Local Dialogue for Morocco in Rabat, Morocco
- **October 2025**
Second National-Local Dialogue for Morocco in Rabat, Morocco



Project Budget \$307.97 Million

GEF Grant: \$9,416,167
Co-finance: \$298,556,388



Implemented by UNDP



Executed by Ministry of Energy, Mines and Environment - Department of Environment



MARRAKECH

Population: 1,010,000

As Marrakech’s geographic footprint has expanded 10-fold in the last 35 years, climate change is threatening the city’s stability and resources. Water scarcity and extreme temperatures are posing a challenge to daily life and to the city’s tourism industry, which makes up a third of the local economy. In 2023, a devastating earthquake struck Morocco. Recovery from the earthquake has strained resources but also galvanized the country’s commitment to resilience (read more on the following page).

To support Marrakech’s efforts to grow and develop sustainably, UrbanShift is working with the city to implement a broad strategy, *Marrakech, Ville Durable*, focused on development that prioritizes incorporating urban nature-based solutions, addressing water stress and strengthening biodiversity. UrbanShift has worked directly with the city to map out its existing green space and biodiversity to better plan for conservation and expansion and is also helping to facilitate efforts to implement a low-emission zone within the city center.

PROGRESS ON GENDER INCLUSION

Morocco has undertaken several strategic reforms in recent years to advance gender equality. In Marrakech, the *Marrakech, Ville Durable* Programme benefits from strengthened female leadership, with women holding key decision-making positions at both the municipal level and within the partner Ministry. The Program places gender integration at the heart of its core principles and aims to reinforce women’s participation and leadership in the transition toward an inclusive green economy. To support this ambition, a gender action plan was developed, along with a collaboration framework with the Equity, Equal Opportunities and Gender Mainstreaming Committee of the City of Marrakech.



“The city of Marrakech wishes to establish an emissions-based zone in its historic Medina, which would be the first of its kind in Africa. Through UrbanShift, Marrakech

had the opportunity to take part in the peer-to-peer exchange with the city of Madrid. It was a very rich experience in terms of knowledge sharing and also helped us to better understand this new concept of planning and implementing low-emission zones. The Moroccan delegation was able to grasp a range of important elements around the need for an integrated approach to planning these zones, and one that takes into account social dynamics to ensure the project will have a strong economic, social and environmental impact.

KARAM AMZIL,
PROJECT COORDINATOR,
UNDP





Marrakech at the Crossroads of Global Environmental Challenges

As one of Morocco's most dynamic and rapidly growing urban centers, Marrakech faces a set of global environmental challenges that are increasingly shaping its development trajectory. The combined effects of climate change—rising temperatures, water scarcity and intensifying heat stress—are placing mounting pressure on the city's infrastructure, ecosystems, and overall quality of life. Rapid urban expansion has also contributed to the fragmentation of natural habitats, threatening biodiversity and reducing ecological resilience in and around the city.

Environmental pollution, including air quality concerns and the growing volume of solid waste and construction debris, further highlights the need for a coordinated and forward-looking approach to sustainable urban development.

"Marrakech is accelerating its efforts to green its urban landscape, enhance its water resilience, and anchor sustainability within its long-term development agenda," said Amal Nadim, Head of the Environment and Climate Change Unit at UNDP Morocco. "These efforts reflect a strong local commitment and a shared vision for a more ecological and climate-resilient future."

To channel these efforts, the city launched *Marrakech, Ville Durable* (Marrakech Resilient City), a wide-ranging initiative to accelerate an integrated and resilient approach to planning. Covering topics such as biodiversity and urban nature to sustainable mobility and waste management, the project aims to support Marrakech to chart a more resilient future. UrbanShift has worked with the city on several planning and visioning activities to shape the city's approach to resilience.

One idea is pursuing a low-emission zone in Marrakech's historic medina. As tourism has grown in Marrakech, air quality and congestion issues have intensified. In November 2024, UrbanShift facilitated a Peer-to-Peer Exchange that brought representatives from Marrakech and Johannesburg to Madrid to learn from the city's efforts to plan and roll out the EU's largest low-emission zone.

"The local leaders [from Morocco] who attended the exchange were drawn to the idea of applying this concept in the context of the medina—the beating heart of the city," said Karam Amzil, the Specialist National Project Coordinator for Marrakech Ville Durable at UNDP Morocco. Following the exchange, planners in Marrakech began to determine possible design and policy approaches to lower emissions in the medina.



Marrakech is also investing in urban nature-based solutions to respond to intensifying heat. Representatives participated in an UrbanShift Geospatial Data Analysis Lab in June 2024 to jumpstart an effort to expand the city's green space and strengthen its biodiversity.

During the Lab, representatives from Marrakech and other Moroccan cities dug into the city's data on green space and biodiversity and assessed the potential for expanding both. Following the Lab, the city mapped all of its green spaces and inventoried existing biodiversity. Now, the city is planning to expand urban nature into underserved and more built-up areas, like the medina, while also creating a stewardship strategy for its green spaces.

"Everyone from the city participated wholeheartedly and contributed and created a great deal of added value," Amzil said. The Lab was so transformative, he added, that Marrakech has expressed interest in organizing another Lab with UrbanShift and other local partners "to enable this collective intelligence to continue to emerge and shape our approach to other challenges." Up next on the city's list of priorities: electric mobility and improving waste management. UrbanShift Global Platform might be concluding this year, but the inspiration from the Peer-to-Peer Exchange and the potential of applying the Lab framework to future planning activities will continue through Marrakech's efforts to enhance resilience for years to come.

RWANDA

While small in size, Rwanda is home to rich biodiversity and dynamic cities that are under threat due to climate and development pressures.

Through the Rwanda Urban Development Project (RUDP II), UrbanShift has supported Kigali, along with six secondary cities—Huye, Muhanga, Musanze, Nyagatare, Rubavu and Rusizi—to improve service provision and enhance resilience to climate risks and natural disasters. In close partnership with the cities, UrbanShift has elevated strategies to sustainably plan for urban expansion, while encouraging the use of nature-based solutions to rehabilitate natural ecosystems and strengthen the country’s resilience against flooding and extreme heat.



UrbanShift has supported Rwanda’s development trajectory, especially around our focus on green growth, climate resilience and

social development. The different inputs we’ve received through UrbanShift have helped us identify progressive and sustainable ways to achieve our goals of expanding affordable housing, upgrading informal settlements and applying densification principles in existing cities. We also have updated our Green Growth and Climate Resilience Strategy to mainstream climate action into all sectors of the economy, with a focus on agriculture, land management, and biodiversity.

THEOS NSHIMIYIMANA
URBAN SETTLEMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE
MANAGEMENT ENGINEER, CITY OF KIGALI

PARTICIPATION IN KEY URBANSHIFT ACTIVITIES

- October 2024**
Clean Transport Finance Academy for African Cities in Accra, Ghana
- February 2025**
Green & Resilient UrbanShift Africa Forum in Nairobi, Kenya
- March 2025**
2nd National-Local Dialogue for Rwanda in Kigali, Rwanda



Project Budget
\$158 Million

GEF Grant: \$8,072,715
Co-finance: \$150,000,000



Implemented by
World Bank



Executed by
Ministry of Infrastructure
(MININFRA)



UrbanShift has played a direct and catalytic role in Kigali’s sustainable urban transformation. Through RUDP II,

UrbanShift provided core funding and technical expertise, enabling the integration of grey infrastructure with green solutions like wetland rehabilitation and stormwater management—embedding resilience into Kigali’s spatial planning. In addition, UrbanShift supported capacity-building through labs, training sessions, multilevel governance dialogues, and workshops, strengthening institutional knowledge and planning capacity. These efforts culminated in the launch of the ambitious Green City Kigali Master Plan in 2024, a flagship initiative promoting inclusive, climate-smart, and integrated urban development.

JEANINE UWERA
INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING SPECIALIST,
CITY OF KIGALI



KIGALI

Population: 1.63 million

In Kigali, UrbanShift has supported a wide variety of sustainable development projects. Inspired by a successful wetland rehabilitation effort undertaken before the launch of the project, Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA) is now pursuing similar restoration work across five urban wetlands to enhance resilience to climate risks and create jobs (read more on the following page). Additionally, as the city rapidly expands, UrbanShift has played a key role in guiding it to assess the connectivity and resilience of new neighborhood sites to ensure required infrastructure to support residents prior to development.

In the project’s secondary cities—Muhanga, Musanze, Huye, Nyagatare, Rubavu and Rusizi—UrbanShift has supported a holistic approach to improving resilience and quality of life for residents. The cities have focused on constructing essential services, like new roads and drainage systems, while also adding greening, retention ponds and native trees to enhance resilience to climate risks like flooding and heat.

PROGRESS ON GENDER INCLUSION

Rwanda, as a country, has a strong focus on gender equality. Legislation from 2003 mandated at least 30% female representation in elected positions, and it has consistently ranked among the top 10 countries for narrowing the gender gap over the last decade. Rwanda also has several national policies designed to further gender equity, including the National Gender Policy, the Social Protection Sector Strategic Plan and the National Urbanization Policy, all of which integrate considerations for gender equality and social inclusion. The UrbanShift project has been diligent about ensuring equal representation of women at all stages of the project—from consultation to implementation. “We continue to see women participating, not only as beneficiaries of the project but also as technical staff and workers bringing the project to life,” said Esther B. Mutamba of the World Bank.



Restoring Kigali’s Wetlands to Create a More Resilient, Connected City

Walking along the paths through the vast Nyandungu Eco-Park in Kigali, Rwanda, it’s difficult to imagine that just years ago, industrial machinery and bedraggled grasses existed where lush trees and flowers now grow. Like in many wetlands across the city, the incursion of polluting industry and human activity had slowly degraded the Nyandungu wetland.

But in 2016, REMA launched an ambitious plan to rehabilitate Nyandungu as both a functional wetland environment and a recreational park. Driving this effort was the knowledge that urban wetlands play a critical role in preventing flooding, addressing pollution and are home to unique biodiversity. As Kigali faces the impacts of climate change, "wetlands have the potential to contribute to building a resilient city, especially through flood control and other ecological functions," said Christelle Ishimwe, Project Manager for the wetland restoration effort at REMA.

Through a multi-year, US\$5 million project, REMA cleared the wetland area of polluting industrial activities, allowing the native fig forest and the streams and ponds of the wetlands to regenerate naturally. Since the park opened in 2022, over 6,000 people

visit each month to run or cycle along the recreational trails, learn about the ecosystem at the educational visitor's center, and simply relax and find respite from the heat among the trees or at the cafe.

Not only has the Nyandungu restoration been a resounding success in and of itself-it also served as positive proof that a similar approach could benefit Kigali’s other struggling wetlands and enhance the city’s overall climate resilience and biodiversity.

In 2024, REMA began to rehabilitate five other wetlands across the city. This wide-ranging, US\$27 million project is projected to benefit over 220,000 Kigali residents with improved flood resilience, enhanced natural ecosystems and a dramatic expansion of publicly accessible green space.

Considering the context and conditions of each area, REMA is working to ensure that each wetland is brought back to full functionality, while layering in amenities and features that meet the needs of the surrounding communities. Gikondo wetland, the largest and most degraded of the sites, will primarily serve as a conservation and recreation area. At a higher altitude in the



city, Rwampara wetland will be restored to absorb and slowly release the large amount of rainwater it collects, and also become a Rwandan cultural hub. Home to a flood-prone river, Nyabugogo wetland will feature a restored riverbank and a new lake for recreation and increased water storage. In restoring Kibumba wetland, REMA is creating a family-friendly educational and recreational facility. The restored Rugenge-Rwintare wetland will offer bamboo groves for gathering and relaxing, and a new walkway and cycling paths.

With the city, REMA set up a multifaceted livelihood transition plan for people affected by the projects so they can pursue other opportunities. "For example, some

affected people are being organized into cooperatives to strengthen collective capacity. Once they develop business plans, they can receive financial support through the livelihood restoration plan to launch or expand enterprises," Ishimwe said. "This approach fosters job creation, access to small grants and credit, and ensures long-term sustainability of their businesses and livelihoods."

As the city has navigated heavy, unpredictable rains and other challenges, the all-Rwandan crews of contractors have been working persistently to complete the projects. Once finalized, the city will have five thriving, functional new green spaces that will benefit both residents and the environment.

SIERRA LEONE

In Sierra Leone, one of the smallest countries in Africa, climate change and deforestation pose a risk to the expanding urban fabric and the quality of life for residents.

Through the Resilient Urban Sierra Leone Project (RUSLP), UrbanShift has worked closely with Freetown and seven secondary cities—Western Area District, Makeni, Koidu New Sembehun, Kenema, Bo, Port Loko and Bonthe—to improve integrated urban planning and service delivery, while also addressing climate risks through nature-based solutions.



Project Budget
\$56.72 Million

GEF Grant: \$6,727,262
Co-finance: \$50,000,000



Implemented by
World Bank



Executed by
Ministry of Finance

PARTICIPATION IN KEY URBANSHIFT ACTIVITIES

- October 2024**
Clean Transport Finance Academy for African Cities in Accra, Ghana
- February 2025**
Green & Resilient UrbanShift Africa Forum in Nairobi, Kenya
- May 2025**
Workshop on Planning, Informality and Waste Management in Freetown, Sierra Leone



“Through the participation in UrbanShift, we’ve really understood the need for resilient urban development and planning to evolve. A clear gap that we have also identified and are now working to fill with UrbanShift’s support is the availability and use of geospatial data. It’s critical that we support cities in scaling up their geospatial capacity and conduct assessments of what’s available. Inspired by UrbanShift’s activities, we are in the process of preparing a municipal spatial data inventory that will go a long way to support future planning activities.

MALEEKA METTEDEN,
URBAN SPECIALIST,
WORLD BANK AND CO-TASK TEAM LEAD, RUSLP



📍 FREETOWN

Population: 1 million

In Freetown, the Resilient Urban Sierra Leone Project has been focused on driving a range of interconnected sustainable urban development priorities. The city’s rapid urbanization has outpaced the development of comprehensive plans and essential services like transport and waste management. To bridge this gap, RUSLP, along with the Freetown City Council (FCC), has been pursuing a targeted area plan for Freetown that lays out a strategy for development and infrastructure provisions—from solid waste infrastructure to stormwater drainage—with a focus on swiftly expanding informal settlements.

Alongside these infrastructure-focused efforts, Freetown has also been prioritizing climate mitigation and resilience in partnership with UrbanShift. The city’s #FreetownTheTreetown initiative aims to plant 5 million trees by 2030 to help cool the city. Additionally, guided by UrbanShift data, the city is focusing on enhancing surface reflectivity and installing shade structures to provide relief. These actions and more stem from Freetown’s first-ever Climate Action Strategy, launched with UrbanShift support at the beginning of 2023.

📍 WESTERN AREA RURAL DISTRICT

Population: 442,951

Across the country, the Resilient Urban Sierra Leone Project has worked with the seven secondary cities in the project to develop spatial plans. The Western Area Rural District Development Plan has been completed and launched, providing a model for the rest of the network.

PROGRESS ON GENDER INCLUSION

Under the leadership of Freetown Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyers, the city has backed a number of projects to empower women and young girls against the backdrop of a historically male-dominated culture. Freetown is a founding partner of the City Hub and Network for Gender Equity (CHANGE), which recently released a Gender Equity Toolkit, and a number of the city’s initiatives, from #FreetownTheTreetown to a market shade installation campaign, explicitly center the needs of women and girls.

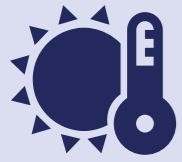


“The Green & Resilient UrbanShift Africa Forum

this year represented a significant milestone, not just for Freetown, but for a number of cities in Sierra Leone.

It was the first time in years that city leaders from Sierra Leone had come together around urban planning-related issues. We were able to participate in various sessions as a team, discuss ideas together, and contribute our insights and challenges to the sessions we attended.

MODUPE WILLIAMS,
URBAN PLANNING AND MOBILITY LEAD,
MAYORS’ DELIVERY UNIT,
FREETOWN CITY COUNCIL



Building an Equitable, Climate-Resilient Future in Freetown

As the Assistant Director of the Fiscal Decentralization Division for Sierra Leone's Ministry of Finance, Saad Barrie faces the reality and the urgency of climate change in his country every day.

By collaborating with UrbanShift over the past five years on the *"Resilient Urban Sierra Leone Project"* he said, more people across national and local governments in Sierra Leone are recognizing the need to act. "Through UrbanShift and the capacity-building activities like City Academies, we now know that we can design and implement a wide variety of climate solutions, even on a low budget, that will make a difference," he said.

UrbanShift's activities have strengthened the country's commitment to climate action. Before the Sierra Leonean delegation traveled to Marrakech for a City Academy training on urban climate finance in February of 2024, the Ministry of Finance had just submitted the final draft of its fiscal decentralization policy, which provides a framework for spending and resource mobilization across levels of government in the country. However, after participating in UrbanShift's course on climate finance, Barrie and the team realized that the decentralization policy did not address climate action. As they began to develop an implementation plan for the

policy, they ensured that climate action was central to the approach. "I'm almost certain that if we had not gone to Marrakech and gotten all of that engagement on climate action and finance, [climate action] would not be [included as a focus area in our decentralization policy]," Barrie said.

Through UrbanShift events, national ministries and the Freetown City Council have strengthened their ability to collaborate. This is evident in the growing momentum around the concept of cable-car-based transportation for Freetown to serve the people who dwell in Freetown's vulnerable hillside communities. "Before UrbanShift, the idea of a cable car system was very politicized—it was seen as infeasible or impractical," Barrie said.

Through the UrbanShift-organized Peer-to-Peer Exchange, representatives of FCC and the Ministry of Finance traveled to Medellín, Colombia, which has an extensive and well-used cable car network spanning its similarly hilly topography. "Following the exchange, they saw how the system is making a difference in Medellín and were able to see how our topography also calls for such a system," Barrie said.

By bringing the relevant national government representatives to Medellín to witness and learn about its system, the coalition was

able to secure technical assistance from the C40 Cities Finance Facility for an in-depth feasibility study on cable cars for Freetown. Recently, Sierra Leone's Director of Public Debt has confirmed that the national government is supportive of the project and keen to play an enabling role for the project to come to fruition.

Urban transformation does not happen overnight. "It's a slow process," Barrie said. Nonetheless, the work unfolding across Freetown and Sierra Leone that UrbanShift helped catalyze is making a substantial

impact. Alongside the cable car and climate finance efforts, "there are conversations happening now about improving roads, improving sanitation. Communities want to deploy biodigesters to transform waste into energy in Freetown. We're talking about enhancing green spaces and nature. All of this is happening," he said. Equipped with the knowledge gained through UrbanShift and the momentum to transform processes across the country to support local climate action planning and programs, Sierra Leone is pointed toward sustainability and resilience.



INDIA

In India, rapid economic growth and urban expansion are playing out against a backdrop of increasing climate hazards, from extreme heat to flooding.

Working with Chennai, Pune and Surat, UrbanShift has supported the cities to develop robust climate resilience projects and sustainable, accessible public transport strategies. With an emphasis on mitigating climate risks while improving quality of life, UrbanShift has accelerated uptake of a variety of nature-based solutions and ecosystem restoration projects, while also encouraging low-emission transit-oriented development (TOD) through the creation of green corridors, bike sharing facilities and EV charging stations.

PARTICIPATION IN KEY URBANSHIFT ACTIVITIES

- **October 2024**
Adaptation Finance Academy for Indian Cities in Ahmedabad, India
- **April 2025**
Geospatial Planning Lab in Puducherry, India
- **July 2025**
China City Academy in Chengdu, China

 The UrbanShift Country Project’s technical and incremental investment support enabled Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) to commit nearly \$2.9 million in co-finance to date towards their coastal resilience and eco-tourism hub project, the Dumas Sea Face Development Project. This effort demonstrates how UrbanShift’s technical assistance de-risks innovative projects and builds confidence for city-level funding for city-level planning.

MANOJ KUMAR MUTHUMANICKAM
PROGRAM MANAGEMENT OFFICER,
GEF CLIMATE MITIGATION UNIT, UNEP



Project Budget
\$517.09 Million

GEF Grant: \$17,215,652
Co-finance: \$499,881,950



Implemented by
UNEP, ADB



Executed by
National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MOHUA), Greater Chennai Corporation



PROGRESS ON GENDER INCLUSION

Urban planning in India is gradually becoming more inclusive. Increasingly, planning departments are centering the needs of women, girls and gender-diverse individuals, as well as the elderly, children and differently abled in project development processes. Efforts are underway to consult women and other often-marginalized stakeholders during initial project consultations, and to ensure that their input is incorporated to enhance safety and accessibility.



“The UrbanShift Global Platform has been instrumental in building the capacity of national and local actors to implement integrated urban planning aligned with climate, biodiversity, and sustainability goals.

Through activities like the Asia Forum, Academies, and Labs that combine technical training, peer learning, and exposure to global best practices, UrbanShift has strengthened institutional knowledge, facilitated cross-sector collaboration, and created direct linkages between national policies and local action, enabling cities to plan and implement climate-resilient, low-carbon, and biodiversity-positive interventions.

VARSHA SINGH
PROJECT COORDINATOR – PMU, URBANSHIFT
COUNTRY PROJECT
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF URBAN AFFAIRS



CHENNAI METROPOLITAN REGION

Population: 11 million

In Chennai, the UrbanShift project has supported a wide-ranging initiative to restore Kadapakkam Lake and the surrounding wetland into a functioning ecosystem and inclusive recreation space to enhance resilience against climate risks (read more on the following page).



PUNE

Population: 10 million

Pune is implementing a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) plan around metro stations to meet increased demand for housing. The TOD guidelines were finalized this year, and Pune is now training staff to integrate these guidelines into future strategies. Pune is also focused on integrating nature-based solutions and new parks to address pollution and improve air quality.



SURAT

Population: 6 million

With the support of UrbanShift and the Transformative Actions Program (read more on page 74), Surat has established a comprehensive coastal resilience and eco-tourism plan. Drawing on insights from UrbanShift’s activities, Surat has incorporated nature-based solutions, eco-sensitive materials, stormwater management strategies, and a range of other sustainability-enhancing design changes into the pilot phase of the project.



AGRA

Population: 1.8 million

Home to the historic Taj Mahal, Agra regularly faces congestion due to high rates of tourism. In response, UrbanShift is assisting the city in improving sustainable transportation through the development of green, low-emission transit corridors.



PUDUCHERRY

Population: 940,911

Puducherry is pursuing a data-informed, comprehensive plan to enhance resilience and livability. The UrbanShift Geospatial Planning Lab empowered Puducherry representatives to identify solutions that could address a range of challenges.



How Chennai is Restoring Kadapakkam Lake with Nature-based Solutions

Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC), India’s oldest municipal body, governs a sprawling and densely populated urban landscape where climate resilience is not just a goal, but a necessity. With much of the city lying barely two meters above sea level and facing intense monsoon rains, Chennai is acutely vulnerable to both floods and droughts. In response, the city has turned to a powerful ally: nature itself.

As part of the UrbanShift program, Chennai is advancing restoration of Kadapakkam Lake in North Chennai. This is more than a beautification project; it’s a strategy rooted in science, tradition and necessity. Once choked with weeds and silt, the lake is being dredged and deepened to improve water retention, reduce flood risk and provide year-round ecosystem services. Beyond flood mitigation, the lake will support biodiversity, educational awareness and community recreation, especially for groups such as women, children and people with disabilities.

With Chennai’s flat topography and coastal exposure, stormwater has nowhere to go

during intense rainfall. But restored water bodies like Kadapakkam Lake act like sponges, absorbing excess water during storms and recharging groundwater during dry spells. As part of its broader Integrated Urban Flood Management Plan for the Kosasthalaiyar River Basin, the city has already restored over 210 such lakes and ponds.

Kadapakkam Lake’s revival is a textbook case of multilevel governance done right. At the helm is the Greater Chennai Corporation, working in coordination with the Municipal Administration and Water Supply Department, the Department of Economic Affairs, ADB, and GEF. The Water Resources Department handles the drainage component, while local NGOs, industry groups and community members contribute insight and support. A formal Lake Management Committee ensures that environmental experts, hydrologists, and citizen representatives all have a seat at the table. This participatory approach not only improves technical outcomes, but also builds public ownership of the space. Local

residents have been employed in tasks like weed removal, landscaping, and solar lighting installation, creating a pipeline for long-term green jobs in maintenance and community stewardship.

Chennai’s engagement in UrbanShift has played a meaningful role in shaping its strategy. Officials from the city have participated in multiple knowledge-sharing forums, including the UrbanShift Asia Forum in 2023 and the Regional City Academy in Indonesia in 2024. These platforms spotlighted best practices in climate adaptation and showcased how other cities are leveraging nature-based solutions and sustainable finance. These exchanges reinforced the city's existing plans while pushing them to systematize lessons

learned, scale blue-green infrastructure, and explore innovative financing mechanisms.

For cities hoping to follow Chennai’s example, the message is clear: Nature-based solutions work best when they are integrated from the start. Chennai underlined the importance of defining clear contracts with measurable outcomes, engaging diverse stakeholders meaningfully, and aligning projects with broader green finance opportunities.

The city’s journey from flood-prone vulnerability to green resilience is still unfolding. But Kadapakkam Lake already tells a compelling story: When cities treat nature as infrastructure, and involve people in the process, they build climate resilience, public trust, and employment.



CHINA

As cities across China—the world’s most populous country—continue to expand, UrbanShift has worked with Chengdu, Chongqing, Ningbo, and Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle to achieve carbon neutrality and enhanced urban resilience through a variety of initiatives, from implementing nature-based solutions to accelerating circular economy strategies.

As part of this effort, UrbanShift has worked with cities to develop an indicator framework on green and low-carbon development to mainstream climate-responsive, integrated urban planning and management.



Project Budget
\$327.60 Million

GEF Grant: \$26,909,050
Co-finance: \$300,693,050



Implemented by
World Bank



Executed by
Ministry of Finance, China Center for Urban Development (CCUD)



PARTICIPATION IN KEY URBANSHIFT ACTIVITIES

- October 2024**
Peer-to-Peer Exchange on Low Carbon Cities in Shenzhen, China
- October 2024**
Second National-Local Dialogue for China in Wuhan, China
- July 2025**
China City Academy in Chengdu, China
- December 2025**
Climate Resilience Workshop for Cities in Beijing, China

PROGRESS ON GENDER INCLUSION

The UrbanShift project in China has prioritized gender equity by integrating it into the project design from the outset. Specifically, the project leads have focused on ensuring equitable gender representation throughout the public consultation and civic engagement processes around the project. Each city-level project is also tracking specific indicators that assess gender equity and access to ensure a gender-sensitive outcome to the projects.

CHENGDU

Population: 16.58 million

With UrbanShift's support, Chengdu has pursued an ambitious strategy to become a “Park City.” A key goal of this initiative is the Tianfu Greenway, which, when complete, will span over 16,900 kilometers, effectively linking all of the city’s parks and green spaces. This effort is intended to balance the pressures of rapid population growth with the region’s renowned natural ecosystems.

CHONGQING

Population: 32 million

As Chongqing faces rapid population growth, its hilly topography is constraining the availability of land for spatial expansion. As a model for how sustainable development could unfold in the city, UrbanShift is supporting Chongqing to create a spatial development strategy for the Bishan district—a large historical area that was formerly an independent county. This plan will address not only development challenges, but also enhance the district’s flood resilience in the face of intensifying rains.

NINGBO

Population: 8.54 million

With immense challenges due to carbon emissions, Ningbo is developing and implementing a comprehensive citywide biodiversity strategy to improve quality of life for residents. With a detailed emissions monitoring system, the city will be able to assess the real-time impact of these initiatives and encourage more zero-carbon initiatives across the city.

CHENGDU-CHONGQING ECONOMIC CIRCLE

Population: 96 million

Across this large, multi-center economic area, UrbanShift is lending support toward ecological connectivity and habitat restoration efforts, while also encouraging waste management and carbon neutrality innovation to balance development with sustainability and resilience.



“The Second UrbanShift National-Local Dialogue for China, jointly organized by UrbanShift and CCUD, was especially

beneficial. Experts discussed technical solutions and shared successful cases on building resilient cities and enhancing urban safety and resilience. The Dialogue helped cities and businesses recognize the urgency and importance of transitioning to green and low-carbon development, offering valuable insights for advancing urban sustainability.

BAI WEI,
DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION DIVISION, CHINA CENTER FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT



“Over the past year, the UrbanShift Global Platform has collaborated with China to host several knowledge-sharing events,

which brought together city officials, technical experts and development partners from across the country to learn about integrated urban development, nature-based solutions, and climate resilience, with a particular focus on the practical challenges and innovations emerging from Chinese cities. Through this engagement, the program reinforced China’s commitment to mainstreaming resilient and low-carbon approaches into urban planning and infrastructure investment.

XIAO WU,
URBAN DEVELOPMENT ANALYST
WORLD BANK



How Ningbo Is Leading the Way as an Urban Biodiversity Hub

In cities, development and biodiversity are often in conflict. As urban areas expand, they can encroach on natural habitats, compromising life for the species that call them home.

But as awareness of the crisis of biodiversity loss has grown, some cities are proving that cities can actually support—rather than harm—their natural ecosystems.

Ningbo is one such city. Nestled against the sea in the eastern part of Zhejiang province, Ningbo’s diverse landscape of mountains, forests, rivers and coastline is home to 2,183 species of wild plants, 546 species of terrestrial wildlife and 1,115 species of marine life.

In 2024, Ningbo launched a comprehensive urban biodiversity effort backed by the GEF, which will expand its efforts to weave undisrupted biodiversity corridors throughout the city and restore ecosystems. "Biodiversity conservation isn't just for natural reserves. It should be part of urban life too," Lu Zichuan, an official of the Ningbo Municipal Bureau of Ecology and Environment,” told China Daily.

This wide-ranging strategic effort builds on the city’s previous work to protect and preserve its natural ecosystems. The city’s effort, beginning in 2005, to transform the Hangzhou Bay Wetland into a thriving national park demonstrated to Ningbo that biodiversity

efforts can help drive both tourism and further investment. Through its trainings on linking urban sustainability and resilience with tourism, UrbanShift has elevated Hangzhou Bay National Wetland Park as a model for nature-positive tourism globally.

Core to the success of the Hangzhou Bay Wetland revitalization was its prioritization of ecological protection. Within its 63.8 square kilometers, the park’s management established specific zones for conservation and for tourist activities. The ecological conservation areas serve exclusively as habitats for birds and fish. The visitor areas of the park, which lie at the northern edge of Ningbo’s city limits, have become renowned for bird-watching and scientific education. With its unique location as a stopover point on the East Asia-Australasia migratory flyway, around 1 million migratory birds visit the wetlands to rest annually.

The dual model of conservation and tourism has delivered multiple benefits to Ningbo city and its surrounding ecosystem. The number of recorded bird species in the wetlands has surged from 169 two decades ago to 303 today, while the park draws around 500,000 visitors each year. For residents of Ningbo, the park provides a hub for educational and

volunteer opportunities, while strengthening the city’s economy through the influx of tourism. Also of note: The wetlands, which clean and filter the local water supply, have played a role in improving water quality for nearby urban residents. According to the World Bank, nearly 90% of the city’s 2.5 million people now have access to high-quality water, in contrast to 23% in 2006.

"This is how we transform ecological resources into tourism resources,” said Wang Guilin, Director of the Ecological Education Department at Zhejiang Hangzhou Bay National Wetland Park. “When our conservation efforts attract tens of thousands of birds and create a spectacular sight for visitors, their praise is the best affirmation of our conservation work."

The success of the Hangzhou Bay Wetland project demonstrates that when urban nature is valued and managed thoughtfully and scientifically, ecological conservation and economic development can not only coexist but also mutually reinforce each other. This learning has motivated Ningbo to expand its biodiversity conservation efforts and is proving to cities and tourism destinations worldwide how to grow sustainably while preserving and protecting natural resources.



INDONESIA

Home to over 270 million people and 12% of all known mammal species, Indonesia is the fourth most populous country in the world and the largest economy in Southeast Asia.

As the country grapples with challenges related to climate change and urbanization, from congestion and emissions to sea level rise, UrbanShift has supported five cities—Jakarta, Balikpapan, Semarang, Bitung and Palembang—on developing pathways to enhance urban resilience, from circular economy approaches for waste management to sustainable tourism strategies.

PARTICIPATION IN KEY URBANSHIFT ACTIVITIES

- May 2025
Geospatial Planning Lab in Bitung, Indonesia
- July 2025
China City Academy in Chengdu, China
- October 2025
Indonesia Second National-Local Dialogue, Jakarta, Indonesia



Semarang's participation in the UrbanShift program has provided direct access to funding networks,

international institutions and other cities. As a result, we are better prepared to develop innovative financing schemes, such as expanding the public-private partnership model. UrbanShift is not just a learning forum, but a catalyst that accelerates our work from ideas to real action.

DEWANGGA RIWICAKSANA,
SENIOR PLANNER
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AGENCY
(BAPPEDA) OF SEMARANG CITY



Project Budget
\$178.17 Million

GEF Grant: \$15,870,200
Co-finance: \$162,300,000



Implemented by
World Bank



Executed by
Indonesian Ministry of
National Development
Planning (BAPPENAS)



UrbanShift has supported cross-sector collaboration and integrated planning efforts that are delivering co-benefits to

Indonesian cities. The UrbanShift Geospatial Planning Lab in Bitung, for example, provided concrete recommendations for how cities can implement environmental protection measures that also drive economic growth.

AGUNG MAHESA HIMAWAN DORODJATOEN
SENIOR PLANNER, MINISTRY OF NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT PLANNING (BAPPENAS)

PROGRESS ON GENDER INCLUSION

Across Indonesia, cities are working to incorporate gender inclusion into planning efforts and project development. Cities like Semarang are layering a gender component onto budget frameworks to ensure that outcomes which improve women's safety and economic mobility are prioritized. Additionally, cities like Bitung are making strides to support women-owned businesses, like recycling services, to enhance women's opportunities within local economies.



JAKARTA

Population: 10.5 million

Indonesia's capital city is facing rapid informal settlement expansion, along with flooding and poor air quality from industry and transport. In response, UrbanShift is supporting the city on strategic planning efforts to address these intersecting challenges, especially those related to clean water access and flooding.



SEMARANG

Population: 1.8 million

A major port and center of industry, Semarang is coping with land subsidence due to groundwater extraction and alluvial soil along with flooding, landslides and coastal erosion—all exacerbated by climate change. To preserve the area's biodiversity and alleviate development-related burdens, UrbanShift is supporting the city on sustainability strategies and public transport upgrades.



PALEMBANG

Population: 1.6 million

Known as a major port city, Palembang is grappling with tree-cover loss due to expansion and a growing agriculture industry. To rectify the city's balance with its surrounding nature, UrbanShift is supporting the city to implement strategies like a resilient riverbank development plan to more sustainably integrate industry, urbanization and nature.



BITUNG

Population: 219,000

Bitung's major fishing and agriculture-based industries threaten the city's rich coastal waters, coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangroves. UrbanShift is helping the city develop robust waste management and ecosystem restoration services to preserve these assets, along with a strategy for sustainable eco-tourism.



BALIKPAPAN

Population: 746,800

A center of the oil, logging and palm oil industries, Balikpapan is also the gateway to the Wain River Forest, home to many of Indonesia's endangered species. To ensure that industry and developmental pressures do no further harm to these surrounding vital ecosystems, UrbanShift is supporting the city to implement a range of sustainability measures, from enhanced waste management to sustainable transportation options.



Building Indonesia’s Approach to Waste Management in Balikpapan

In Indonesia, waste management is a complex and growing challenge. The country both generates and imports a vast quantity of waste. Major Indonesian cities produce around 8 million tons of waste per day, and Indonesia, collectively, is responsible for the third most waste-related greenhouse gas emissions in the world.

Balikpapan, a port city on the island of Borneo in the East Kalimantan province, refutes this trend. Since 2002, the city has been investing heavily in waste management infrastructure as part of its overall vision to become a livable city for all by 2045 by balancing social, economic, and environmental development. Effective waste management, along with clean energy, sustainable transportation and preserving urban biodiversity, are central to Balikpapan’s strategy, which was highlighted as a model approach to solid waste management during the UrbanShift City Academy in Jakarta in 2024.

Core to Balikpapan’s success in the waste management sector is a comprehensive and integrated approach. In 2002, the city completed work on the Manggar Final Waste Processing Site (TPAS), which spans 39.90

hectares and contains both a sanitary landfill site and a waste treatment system. Landfills are typically places to avoid, but in developing Manggar, Balikpapan pursued a different vision. The city has worked steadily to ensure the site is safe and non-toxic, and has added a range of amenities to attract visitors, including a zip line, children’s playground, sauna, picnicking facilities and a small gallery where art objects made from recycled materials are exhibited. The intent? To provide a functional public space where residents can gather to learn about the the importance of recycling, reuse and waste management.

But establishing an interactive waste processing site is only one component of a successful strategy. Balikpapan has worked to implement a tiered system in its waste management approach. At the household and business level, residents and managers collect and sort their waste in dedicated bins. At the district level, collection services adhere to a strict schedule for gathering and transporting the waste to Manggar.

Given that Balikpapan, a city of over 746,000 people, generates around 590 tons of waste per day, the city set an ambitious goal in



2023 to overall reduce waste generation by 27% and ensure that 73% of waste produced is managed. In practice, the city, through its comprehensive and collective effort, reduced waste volume by 23% and managed 71% of its waste that year. By 2045, the city is aiming for a 40% waste reduction rate, and to successfully manage the rest of its waste.

While many Indonesian cities do not have comprehensive waste management systems, Balikpapan has set itself apart. "I have reviewed the Manggar landfill in Balikpapan twice, and I can say it has one of the best waste management systems in the country

— it’s suitable to be used as a pilot," said Environment Minister Hanif Faisol Nurofiq.

Balikpapan could serve as a model for other cities looking to integrate emissions reductions and circular economy approaches in waste management, but land availability poses a challenge for replication. However, especially as Indonesia prepares to shift its capital city to Nusantara in East Kalimantan province, Balikpapan is positioned to play a critical role in supporting sustainable waste management and development in this new hub for Indonesia.

GLOBAL PLATFORM



Sometimes, urban transformation unfolds following a broad global commitment, like the Paris Agreement, which galvanizes cities and countries to work toward common sustainability goals. But it can also build from the ground up: A planner might visit another city, witness a compelling project in action, and bring that idea home. UrbanShift’s global platform, over the past five years, has encouraged urban transformation, both from the top down and the bottom up. Our advocacy efforts and regional Forums have strengthened global climate commitments and encouraged city participation in efforts around reducing plastic pollution, strengthening nature-based solutions, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and combating urban heat. Our targeted capacity-building activities, from City Academies to Peer-to-Peer Exchanges, have sparked the spread of meaningful ideas across borders and contexts. Through it all, we have united stakeholders from across levels of government and across sectors to learn from one another and work together on solutions. Read on for highlights from UrbanShift’s Global Platform final year.



GREEN & RESILIENT URBANSHIFT AFRICA FORUM

FEBRUARY 17-21
NAIROBI, KENYA

This flagship regional Forum of the UrbanShift global platform united city leaders from across Africa for a week of networking, capacity building and collaboration around solutions to shared challenges.

African cities are set to double in population over the next few decades and already facing the threats of climate change, from extreme heat to flooding. At the nexus of these challenges, UrbanShift convened around 350 urban leaders and experts in Nairobi, Kenya to envision and plan for a more resilient urban future across the continent. Organized by C40 Cities, the Green & Resilient UrbanShift Africa Forum ignited powerful discussions and calls to action around securing a sustainable and thriving future for generations to come.



“

We need to deliver infrastructure solutions at a pace that matches our ambition to safeguard our future. Our future depends on us. Investing in Africa is investing in a more stable, prosperous, and climate-resilient future for all.

YVONNE AKI-SAWYERR,
MAYOR OF FREETOWN AND C40 CITIES CO-CHAIR

ELEVATING THE NEED FOR ACTION

Hosted at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi, the Forum’s opening ceremony galvanized participants around the potential of African cities and the need for urgent action on sustainable development. Leaders from across the continent, including Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, Freetown Mayor and C40 Cities Co-Chair, and Governor Sakaja Arthur Johnson, Governor of Nairobi City County, underscored the need for greater investment in resilient infrastructure and solutions across Africa. This Forum reflects the very essence of UrbanShift: bringing together city leaders, policymakers, and partners to drive integrated solutions that create thriving, resilient urban spaces. Cities are where solutions to the world’s greatest challenges—from climate change to inequality—can take root and flourish, said Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, GEF Executive Director and President of the Board.



CALLING FOR TRANSFORMATION ON URBAN CLIMATE FINANCE

Underscoring the urgent need for equitable urban development and climate action, the Forum launched an open letter from 23 mayors and governors—the number of signatories is still growing to date—from some of Africa’s largest cities, calling on national governments to prioritize sustainable investments and remove barriers to finance that could catalyze and fast-track urban climate action projects that have robust development outcomes.

LAUNCHING VITAL NEW RESOURCES FOR CITIES

Ensuring that the Forum’s impact would extend well beyond the week in Nairobi, several new platforms and guides for cities debuted during the event. C40 Cities and UN-Habitat announced a landmark partnership to create an integrated Urban Planning Accelerator to support cities with cutting emissions by 25% by 2050 while creating safer, fairer, and more inclusive urban environments. Highlighting findings from a new assessment of urban nature-based solutions in Sub-Saharan Africa, WRI and Cities4Forests launched a new [report and accelerator](#) to support implementation of NbS in cities. And C40 Cities, UrbanShift and the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM) launched the [Sustainable Investment Action and Advocacy Roadmap](#), a tool outlining practical steps mayors and their teams can take to start acting and advocating for climate action.

EXPLORING NAIROBI'S SUSTAINABILITY PROGRESS

During the Forum, participants visited four different sites in and around Nairobi: a recently redesigned avenue that encourages pedestrianization (Luthuli Avenue), a facility that transforms waste into art (Ocean Sole), an electric vehicle manufacturing plant (ROAM Park), and one of Kenya’s largest informal settlements (Mukuru) where a significant settlement upgrading process is unfolding. These site visits sparked ideas and discussion among the participants around how to replicate and scale sustainable solutions.

BUILDING CAPACITY TO ADDRESS URBAN CHALLENGES

During the second half of the Forum, city delegates split into three groups for capacity building around Accommodating Urban Growth (led by C40 Cities), Green & Thriving Neighbourhoods (led by UNEP) and Circular Economy Strategies for Sustainable Development (led by ICLEI). Building off the momentum from the Forum, the City Academy courses deepened participants’ understanding of the challenges facing African cities and how solutions could accelerate across the continent.



“ Mayors are ready, communities are mobilizing, and the solutions exist – now it’s time for governments and investors to step up.

Unlocking finance for cities isn’t just the right thing to do; it’s the smartest possible investment in Africa’s future. Every dollar invested in sustainable urban development today will pay back in resilient economies, thriving communities and a healthier planet for generations to come.

MARK WATTS,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, C40 CITIES

URBANSHIFT LOOKS BACK: REFLECTING ON THE IMPACT OF OUR CAPACITY-BUILDING OFFER

Building more resilient and equitable cities starts with building a strong foundation of knowledge among people living and working in cities. Since UrbanShift's launch in 2021, the program engaged over 7,000 people across the network of cities in Asia, Africa and Latin America through its unique capacity-building offer, which spans everything from technical training on geospatial data to inspirational study tours and peer exchanges on best practices.

"Each of UrbanShift's capacity-building activities was intentionally designed to highlight examples of integrated planning approaches, both thematically but also in the way that projects develop within cities," said Mariana Orloff, Senior Advisor for UrbanShift with World Resources Institute. UrbanShift's core themes—from nature-based solutions to climate action planning—all depend on stakeholders uniting around shared goals and creating a cohesive, data-driven path for translating these goals into action.

While, as Orloff noted, "capacity-building is not implementation," UrbanShift's broad capacity-building efforts equipped participants with tools, resources, and connections to fuel integrated planning approaches across the network.

"We have a sense right now, as we look toward the final year of the program, that some of the countries in our network are really making progress, really absorbing the ideas and capacity that UrbanShift has offered them, and using that to inform how they create positive change for people, nature and climate," said John-Rob Pool, Senior Manager for UrbanShift at WRI. "Some of the other UrbanShift country projects are facing challenges that mean we

might not see impacts for quite some time. And that's just the reality of doing this work."

There is also the fact, Pool added, that in the field of urban development, there is often a lag between the work that you do and the impact that you have. "Nature-based solutions itself is a good analogy here," he said. "You don't plant a tree today and have shade tomorrow, right? You have to wait 15, 20 years for it to grow. The benefits accrue over time."

UrbanShift designed its capacity-building offer with this long horizon in mind. "We intended the whole capacity-building offer to be a learning journey," Orloff said. Again, to take urban nature-based solutions as an example: Someone could learn about the overall concept in a City Academy, see a successful approach to implementing them in another city through a Peer-to-Peer Exchange, like the one UrbanShift hosted in Barranquilla on urban nature-based solutions, and then participate in a Geospatial Data Lab where they could actually look analytically at their city and understand where implementing nature-based solutions could have the greatest impact. The Finance Academies could help them connect cities with potential financiers to bring a project to life. "By

exposing people to the same concepts over and over again, through different avenues, we could open up pathways to implementation and help people understand what it takes to conceptualize and build out a successful project," she said.

"When we think about the long-term impacts of the project—our goals around improving

conditions for people, nature, and climate—it can feel hard to quantify, because these transformations materialize on a much longer timescale than our five-year project," Pool said. "But we can track the number of people we've reached, utilize the feedback we receive, and know that we have at least planted seeds for transformation—some of which are already starting to take root."





CITY ACADEMY

UrbanShift’s City Academy offers in-person trainings in each of the nine program countries. These two- to three-day sessions combine presentations and interactive exercises with the sharing of best practices and site visits in the host city. Through the City Academy, participants acquire in-depth knowledge on topics such as the circular economy and nature-based solutions, gain exposure to international experts, and connect with cities working on similar issues.

CITY ACADEMIES:

- February 20-21, 2025
Green & Thriving Neighbourhoods, Circular Economy and Accommodating Urban Growth
Nairobi, Kenya
- July 1-3, 2025
Green & Thriving Neighbourhoods and Urban Biodiversity
Chengdu, China



“

The China City Academy gave city teams across Asia practical help they could apply right away. It linked them to peers and mentors, showed what works, and offered tools that could speed up or improve the implementation of climate projects.

ALYSSA CHENAULT,
URBANSHIFT GLOBAL MANAGER,
ICLEI

EXPLORE THE ONLINE CITY ACADEMY

UrbanShift’s online City Academy offers eight free courses on UrbanShift’s key areas of focus, from nature-based solutions to urban climate finance. Available in six languages, these courses offer interactive learning modules, city-based case studies, and self-study resources to deepen knowledge. Since UrbanShift launched these courses in September 2023, nearly 5,000 learners have enrolled in these self-paced courses to build their skills and bring cutting-edge knowledge to their cities. Learn more and enroll at shiftcities.org/online-city-academy. Learn more and enroll at shiftcities.org/online-city-academy.

CHENGDU, CHINA

July 1-3, 2025

EXPLORING BIODIVERSITY AND GREEN & THRIVING NEIGHBORHOODS IN CHENGDU

Through the heart of Chengdu—known worldwide as the home of China’s giant pandas—a new green corridor is taking shape. The Tianfu Greenway, of which over 7,000 kilometers have already been constructed, will, by its projected completion in 2040, span around 20,000 kilometers. This greenway system, the longest planned in the world, will connect parks, playgrounds, and green spaces, effectively transforming the city into a multifaceted park. Which is Chengdu’s vision: The city is working to transform itself into a “park city”—an urban area that exists and grows in sync with its natural elements.

Chengdu, then, was a fitting backdrop for UrbanShift’s final City Academy, which focused on two essential and interconnected topics: Urban Biodiversity and Green and Thriving Neighbourhoods. Hosted from July 1-3, 2025, the City Academy brought together about 120 city leaders, urban planners, environmental engineers and ecology officers from China, India, Malaysia, Mongolia, and the Philippines for this transformative multi-day training. ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability organized the event with the support of World Resources Institute (WRI), UN Environment Programme, C40 Cities, UN-Habitat and other partners.

“A good city is not just built—it is grown, like a forest,” said Ding Rui from Chengdu Institute of Planning and Design. “It nurtures people, embraces nature, and leaves space for dreams to flourish.” Chengdu’s “Park City” strategy focuses on forest parks, ecological corridors, and people-centered public spaces with the intent of improving quality of life and environmental resilience together—and providing a model for other cities looking to do the same.

Through the Urban Biodiversity course, World Resources Institute experts illustrated how cities can analyze and apply data to structure urban biodiversity strategies. Featuring global frameworks and practical principles for robust, data-driven action, the course explored the

concept of biodiversity-as-infrastructure, highlighting the environmental benefits and cost savings of integrating nature-based solutions with traditional gray infrastructure. Given that one of the most substantial hurdles to effective urban biodiversity strategies is financing, the course leads shared a variety of funding resources—including ICLEI’s Transformative Actions Program (read more on page 74)—with participants, along with guidance on converting innovative biodiversity concepts into investment-ready projects.

In the Green and Thriving Neighbourhoods course, led by UNEP with support from C40 Cities and UN-Habitat, participants explored best practices for designing climate-resilient, economically vibrant, and livable neighborhoods. Expert speakers emphasized that urban form shapes every aspect of the urban experience, from emissions and infrastructure costs to productivity and opportunity. Together, participants discussed the potential of a neighborhood-scale approach for transformative action, and how to consolidate fragmented low-carbon community efforts into a cohesive plan centered around public participation.

On the final day of the City Academy, the participants ventured out into the city of Chengdu to ground their learnings in the lived reality of the city. Sino-Singapore (Chengdu) Innovation Park, a hub blending low-carbon design with high-tech innovation and social benefits, showed how cities can integrate contemporary industry sustainably into the urban fabric. In Heartbeat Central Park, participants witnessed how a thoughtful approach to biodiverse and climate-resilient recreational spaces can breathe life into a community. And Luxelakes Eco City showed the potential of sustainably managed urban water features to improve quality of life.

Overall, the City Academy provided participants with practical tools, deep peer learning, and renewed confidence to implement systemic urban transformations across Asia, paving the way for greener, more biodiverse, and thriving neighborhoods aligned with global sustainability goals.





PEER-TO-PEER EXCHANGES

UrbanShift’s Peer-to-Peer Exchanges facilitate knowledge sharing around integrated urban development solutions among cities. These in-person events span two to three days and bring UrbanShift city representatives to non-UrbanShift counterparts to explore practical solutions to a challenge selected by the participating city.



UrbanShift’s Peer-to-Peer Exchanges harness peer learning to help cities build on solutions that are already proven elsewhere. Through this approach, Teresina brought back ideas from Barranquilla to accelerate nature-based solutions, Marrakech drew on Madrid’s example to plan a low-emission zone in its historic medina, and Freetown, inspired by Medellín’s cable car system, advanced national financing discussions on the feasibility of its own.

JOHN-ROB POOL,
SENIOR MANAGER FOR URBANSHIFT, WRI
ROSS CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES



PEER TO PEER EXCHANGES:

- **October 28-30, 2024**
Creating Low-Carbon Cities
Shenzhen, China
- **November 5-7, 2024**
Implementing Clean-Air Zones
Madrid, Spain

MADRID, SPAIN November 5-7, 2024

EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES TO TRANSFORM HISTORIC DISTRICTS INTO CLEAN-AIR ZONES

From November 5-7, 2024, city representatives from Johannesburg and Marrakech, alongside national government delegates from Morocco, convened in Madrid for a Peer-to-Peer Exchange on Clean Air Zones (CAZs). Hosted in partnership with the City of Madrid—home to the largest CAZ in the European Union—the exchange provided a dynamic platform to explore enabling policies, technical solutions, stakeholder engagement strategies and implementation best practices critical to successful CAZ design and delivery.

Both Johannesburg and Marrakech are advancing ambitious plans to introduce CAZs in the near future. This exchange offered an invaluable opportunity for representatives from the cities to engage directly with Madrid’s urban mobility and environmental teams, gaining first-hand insights from a leading European city that is currently working to transform its entire municipal territory into a Low Emission Zone.

The dialogue built on Johannesburg’s ongoing technical assistance program, supported by the Clean Air Fund (2022–2024), which focuses on improving urban air quality and reducing transport-related emissions. Throughout the three-day exchange, participants exchanged ideas and insights on equity, inclusivity, and strategic communication—highlighting the imperative for CAZs to be not only technically robust but also socially just and

responsive to diverse urban needs.

Participants explored a range of policy and design considerations, including the distinctions between Low-Emission Zones (LEZs) and Zero-Emission Areas (ZEAs), as well as practical transition pathways from one to the other. While CAZ definitions and models differ across contexts, cities shared a strong consensus on the need to align interventions with local regulatory environments and community priorities. Clearly communicating the public benefits of CAZs—improved air quality, health outcomes, safety, and urban vitality—participants agreed, was central to public buy-in and long-term success.

Another key insight that arose during the exchange was the need to couple CAZ rollouts with investments in accessible and affordable public transport. Without viable alternatives to private vehicle use, cities risk undermining the effectiveness and equity of CAZ policies. Participants also emphasized how phased, scalable implementation can help maintain clarity and political support over time.

This tri-city exchange reaffirmed the value of peer learning across geographies and development contexts. By sharing their respective experiences, challenges, and innovations, Johannesburg, Marrakech, and Madrid deepened their collective understanding of how to deliver CAZs that are ambitious, inclusive, and impactful. The exchange also strengthened inter-city relationships and advanced a shared commitment to cleaner air and more livable urban futures.





GEOSPATIAL DATA

UrbanShift works closely with cities to identify, provide and analyze geospatial data and key sustainability indicators to highlight critical urban challenges and suggest integrated, data-informed solutions. Geospatial analysis forms the backbone of UrbanShift’s Labs (see more on this page) and support for cities on climate action planning (see page 84).



UrbanShift Labs and its data analysis support have enabled cities to integrate climate adaptation and informed evidence-based decisions. By combining the priorities of local stakeholders with insights from international cases brought by UrbanShift partners, the Labs bridge global knowledge and local action for more resilient and inclusive urban futures.

PABLO LAZO
URBAN DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR,
WRI ROSS CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES

SPOTLIGHT ON THE CITYMETRICS DASHBOARD

Data guides how cities understand the impacts of climate change—and how they can build resilience. UrbanShift’s geospatial indicators dashboard, originally developed in 2023 and revamped this year as the CityMetrics dashbaord, helps cities visualize how climate change is reshaping their local urban environments. Spanning over 50 cities—including all 23 cities in the UrbanShift network—the dashboard assesses critical factors like air quality, emissions, and surface reflectivity so cities can understand their challenges and prioritize effective mitigation strategies.

Access the dashboard at citymetrics.wri.org



URBANSHIFT LABS

UrbanShift Labs are interactive two- to four-day workshops that illustrate the importance of integrated, evidence-based city planning approaches and demonstrate an alternative to siloed decision-making. The Labs help shape policy and catalyze projects, providing a concrete example of multi-stakeholder coordination in participating cities. The UrbanShift team works with each city to understand their strategic needs and how the Lab should be structured to support them.

- **April 29-30, 2025**
Geospatial Planning Lab: Understanding Climate Hazards and Co-Creating Resilience
Puducherry, India
- **May 6-7, 2025**
Geospatial Planning Lab: Strategizing for Sustainable Economic Growth
Bitung, Indonesia
- **December 4, 2025**
Climate Resilience Workshop for Cities in China
Beijing, China

EXPLORE INSIGHTS FROM URBANSHIFT LABS

Over the course of the UrbanShift program, Labs offered unique, co-designed forums for cities to explore their data in-depth and generate impactful solutions. Case studies from UrbanShift's eight labs reflect insights and best practices, and offer a template for scaling this capacity-building initiative to other cities.

Learn more at <https://www.shifcities.org/publication/urbanshift-labs>

BITUNG, INDONESIA May 6-7, 2025

CO-CREATING A DATA-INFORMED VISION FOR ECO-FRIENDLY TOURISM IN BITUNG

Bitung’s unique geography of coastal and marine ecosystems boasts rich biodiversity, including mangroves, coral reefs, fish, crab and dolphins. It’s no surprise that this city, in recent years, has become one of Indonesia’s most popular marine tourism destinations. People flock to visit Batu Angus and Batuputih Nature Tourism Parks and dive in the Lembeh Strait.

But Bitung is facing development pressures that threaten the well-being of its unique natural beauty and the tourism industry that’s unfolding around it. Without changing course, Bitung risks both its biodiversity and its attractiveness as a tourist destination.

To meet this need, UrbanShift coordinated a Geospatial Planning Lab for the city focused on sustainable planning and development. Led by WRI in collaboration with ICLEI, BAPPENAS, the World Bank and the Bitung City Government, the Lab promoted the use of integrated spatial planning tools and geospatial data to align tourism development with conservation priorities and local economic goals.

The Lab convened participants from the Local Development Planning Agency (Bappeda), Tourism Agency, Public Works, Spatial Planning Agency and North Sulawesi Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA), as well as subdistrict heads and village leaders. Together, participants explored a variety of geospatial strategies and policy recommendations that could feed into ongoing planning and tourism efforts.

Insights from Bitung’s data revealed that the city’s growth is currently concentrated toward the south, as well as parts of Lembeh Island’s coastline. Moving forward, the participants agreed that the city must ensure that future expansion does not further encroach on conservation areas. By considering an area’s environmental carrying capacity, the city can ensure growth without damage to vital ecosystems. During the Lab, participants collaborated on developing concrete spatial development strategies and policy recommendations to bring this vision to life.



WEBINARS

UrbanShift’s free, open access webinars spotlight critical and emerging topics related to urban sustainability, climate resilience and mitigation. Featuring insights from leaders and subject-matter experts from the program’s three regions, these webinars emphasize the vital role of traditionally marginalized groups and outline the limitations and opportunities to foster inclusive, sustainable urban growth in the global South.

WEBINARS:

- **October 24, 2024**
Building Equitable Futures: Implementing A Just Transition In Urban Environments
- **November 22, 2024**
Enhancing Urban Infrastructure Resilience Through Nature-Based Solutions In South Asian Cities
- **December 4, 2024**
Scaling Up Urban Climate Finance Through Multi-level Governance
- **February 5, March 5, March 26, 2025**
Building Capacity to Assess Urban Climate Hazards and Tackle Heat and Flooding in Cities: A Three-Part Capacity Building Training Webinar Series
- **May 27, 2025**
Nature-Positive Tourism: How Local Leadership Can Balance Conservation and Economic Growth
- **July 2, 2025**
Sustainable Finance Action and Advocacy: A Roadmap For Global South Cities



9 VIRTUAL

February 5, March 5 and March 26, 2025

BUILDING CAPACITY TO UNDERSTAND AND MITIGATE URBAN CLIMATE HAZARDS

As cities face mounting climate risks—from extreme heat to flooding—it's imperative that they take urgent action to mitigate the worst impacts and adapt to this new reality. But where should they start? And what should this action look like?

The Climate Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (CHVA) framework—which WRI India created and introduced in 2024—can help city officials and planners better answer these questions. Divided into three parts—Hazard Identification and Assessment, Exposure Analysis, and Vulnerability Assessment—the CHVA framework centers both geospatial data and community insights, and guides practitioners toward effective and responsive resilience strategies. To introduce this framework to the UrbanShift network, UrbanShift hosted a three-part webinar series with WRI India and Cities4Forests to explore the CHVA framework and examples of how it can support action on both urban heat and flood resilience.

As an introduction to the CHVA framework, the first webinar in this series explored how several Indian cities have made use of the methodology to identify the most vulnerable areas, prioritize interventions, and ensure that adaptation measures are targeted effectively. While climate risks affect cities broadly, the CHVA framework encourages nuance and prioritization in the development of solutions, and equips cities with the tools and resources to develop data-informed strategies.

The second webinar explored how cities can work together with communities to develop a nuanced, neighborhood-scale understanding of heat stress and invest in effective greening and nature-based solutions approaches. Leaders from Tshwane, South Africa shared how *residents have mapped temperature variations* across the city and revealed that informal settlements experience temperatures 5-8°C higher than affluent areas. Along with residents, the city is now exploring targeted greening interventions and shade structure development in vulnerable communities. This webinar installment encouraged participants to understand heat through the eyes of the most vulnerable residents, and lean on both data and community insights to develop action plans.

The third and final webinar explored how by restoring wetlands, expanding green spaces, and integrating permeable surfaces, cities can better manage flooding and stormwater risks while delivering a host of co-benefits for people and ecosystems. From “sponge city” solutions in Mumbai, India to comprehensive habitat rehabilitation and tree-planting efforts in Jayapura, Indonesia, the webinar shared how cities around the world are using nature-based solutions to both improve quality of life for residents and build resilience against climate-driven flood risks.

Together, these three webinars offered city leaders and practitioners a better understanding of urban climate hazards and practical, on-the-ground solutions that prioritize the most vulnerable.



By offering open-access webinars, UrbanShift ensures that city officials, urban practitioners, and stakeholders worldwide can engage with core themes of integrated planning and climate action. The Climate Hazard Vulnerability Assessment three-part series, which covered the CHVA framework, nature-based solutions for extreme heat, and flooding, equipped cities in the Global South with data tools and implementation pathways to prioritize interventions and build climate-resilient urban systems.

MARIANA ORLOFF,
SENIOR ADVISOR FOR URBANSHIFT,
WRI ROSS CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES

URBANSHIFT LOOKS BACK: ON THE VALUE OF EXPANDING ACCESS TO URBAN CLIMATE FINANCE

Since the beginning of the program, finance has always been at the core of UrbanShift's work. Lack of access to finance is one of the major roadblocks cities face in implementing climate action and sustainable urban development at the scale and at the pace needed. "Addressing that gap is one of the driving forces of our work," said Jessy Appavoo, UrbanShift Lead at C40 Cities. "There would be limited impact without finance."

At the time that the UrbanShift program was designed in 2019, many cities were stepping up their ambitions in terms of sustainable development and climate action in the wake of the Paris Agreement. But this acceleration made more evident the gap between the types of infrastructure and actions envisioned in these plans, and the ability of cities to access the finance to implement them. "At UrbanShift, we realized that we needed to address not only the upstream issues related to climate action planning, but also project development and the lack of direct connections to financiers," said André Almeida da Vila, Innovative Finance Officer at ICLEI.

To meet this need, UrbanShift has offered a wide and nuanced variety of finance support to cities. The City Academy course on Accessing Urban Climate Finance, which ICLEI created both as an online module and as an in-person training delivered in all three UrbanShift regions—has offered a comprehensive overview of finance sources and instruments; project conceptualization and development; and ensuring project bankability. UrbanShift's Finance Academies, led by C40, take capacity-building a level deeper and guide city officials

through navigating the policy landscape around specific sectors—from adaptation to clean energy to electric mobility—in their region.

Beyond training, UrbanShift has also created opportunities to connect directly with financiers and access hands-on support. During C40's Investors Roundtable, cities have been able to present their projects directly to financiers and receive feedback in real time. "What better way to start shifting the flow of finance than to facilitate direct dialogues between those who provide finance and those with a need for it?," said Appavoo. And both ICLEI's Transformative Actions Program (TAP) and C40's Light-Touch Technical Assistance offer cities support in developing and refining ideas into financeable projects.

But UrbanShift's approach to broadening access to urban climate finance has gone beyond working within the current system. For cities to access the funds they need for transformative change, the finance system itself must evolve. "There is a lot more recognition now around the need to engage local governments in the environmental movement more broadly, and finance has been a key

point in the conversation," said Sharon Gil, Cities Lead at UN Environment Programme. Through UrbanShift, UNEP has led a concerted advocacy effort to raise awareness, at major global forums and events, of the critical role cities play in biodiversity, waste mitigation, and so many more aspects of climate action. "Over the past five years, we've seen the entire world start to wake up to the idea that cities need to be resourced to live up to their transformative potential," Gil added.

As the world wakes up to the need to ensure cities have access to the resources they need to innovate and evolve, UrbanShift has already seen the benefits of supporting this effort. Cities across the network are advancing meaningful projects with the help of UrbanShift. With the support of TAP,

Buenos Aires was able to develop a compelling proposal for a comprehensive urban mobility plan and secure funding for it from the GAP Fund. With Light-Touch Technical Assistance, Freetown was able to design a plan for financing and rolling out solar energy. And during a 2023 Finance Academy on adaptation in Brazil, several financial institutions were in the room as a major Brazilian city shared its bold plans to address flooding and drought management at scale. That moment sparked interest among the financiers, and the conversation continued after the Academy around how to get the city the over \$700 million needed to boost its resilience. "It was a powerful reminder of what can happen when cities have the space, tools, and audience to turn ambition into action," Appavoo said.





FINANCE SUPPORT

Finance underpins all efforts for transforming integrated planning concepts into tangible, impactful projects. Through UrbanShift, cities can access a range of support across the project development process. In the early stages, UrbanShift supports cities in developing bankable projects and understanding how to overcome barriers to finance. Later on, UrbanShift connects cities to potential investors and supports them in implementing and scaling infrastructure projects that support sustainable urban development.



LIGHT-TOUCH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Nine cities have been, or are currently being, supported by UrbanShift through Light-Touch Technical Assistance on finance: Alajuelita, Buenos Aires, Chengdu, Chennai, Durban (eThekweni), Freetown, Jakarta, Nairobi, Teresina. This support has helped cities build capacity on a range of topics including, but not limited to mapping of financial sources, development of tax incentives, applying for financing, and investment planning.

INVESTORS ROUNDTABLES

These convenings during UrbanShift Forums unite finance and technical climate experts from cities and financial institutions for in-depth, actionable discussions around overcoming financing challenges. During the Investors Roundtable hosted within the Green & Resilient UrbanShift Africa Forum, for example, nine cities were able to connect with financiers for input on early-stage projects, and are now in discussion with participating financing institutions on potential financing arrangements.

TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIONS PROGRAM (TAP)

Led by ICLEI, this global initiative assists subnational governments to turn their sustainable infrastructure ideas into solid, investment-ready projects. TAP connects projects with potential investors and project preparation facilities and provides personalized support for project development.

FINANCE ACADEMIES

Led by C40, Finance Academies bridge urban climate finance gaps by encouraging knowledge sharing between cities, technical experts and financial institutions. Finance Academies equip cities with technical knowledge on specific finance approaches and instruments and provide opportunities for cities to establish or deepen relationships with finance institutions, project preparation facilities and climate funds.

FINANCE ACADEMIES:

- **October 15-17, 2024**
Clean Transport Finance Academy for African Cities
Accra, Ghana
- **October 22-24, 2024**
Adaptation Finance Academies for Indian Cities
Ahmedabad, India



“UrbanShift has helped shift global awareness toward the urgent need and the persistent barriers to resource cities for climate action, while also equipping them with the tools to act. Through initiatives like the Transformative Actions Program, Finance Academies, and Investor Roundtables, cities have developed bankable projects, received tailored technical assistance, and connected directly with financiers—unlocking their transformative potential.

GULNARA ROLL,
HEAD OF CITIES UNIT, UNEP

AHMEDABAD, INDIA October 22-24, 2024

MOBILIZING RESOURCES FOR CLIMATE ADAPTATION IN INDIAN CITIES

The UrbanShift Adaptation Finance Academy, led by C40 in collaboration with the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, united central government officials, municipal representatives from cities, international financial institutions, regional think tanks and climate and urban experts to advance climate adaptation financing for cities.

The Academy included representatives from Ahmedabad, Surat, Jabalpur, Indore, Puducherry, Chennai, Delhi NCT, Mumbai and Bengaluru, along with prominent stakeholders from the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, the Ministry of Finance and global financiers including the AIIB, World Bank, USAID, GAP Fund, and Climate Fund Managers. Think tanks such as NIUA, WRI India, CDRI, ICLEI, Climate Policy Initiative and CDP added technical expertise.

The AFA was designed to enhance the capacity of city officials in developing bankable adaptation projects, integrating climate adaptation into financial planning, and creating a robust pipeline of bankable projects.

A major highlight of the Academy was the presentation of projects by six cities, which received targeted advisory support from experts and financial institutions to advance project development and financing.

One standout case was the City of Puducherry, which presented its coastal protection project aimed at combating severe erosion along Puducherry Beach. The initiative combines nature-based and engineered solutions, including the construction of two offshore reefs—one of which is already completed—successfully restoring a significant stretch of beach and replenishing natural sand over previously deployed rock boulders.

By linking impactful projects like this with financiers who can play a critical role in bringing them to implementation, the UrbanShift Adaptation Finance Academy created a vital avenue for progress on climate action for Indian cities.

URBANSHIFT LOOKS BACK: ON CHANGING THE CONVERSATION AROUND THE VALUE OF CITIES FOR GLOBAL CLIMATE ACTION

UrbanShift’s intentionally designed advocacy effort has served as the way the program connects with the broader global effort to elevate the role of cities in achieving multilateral environmental goals. Led by UNEP and amplified by its strong foothold within the global environmental space, “our aim was both to amplify messages and learnings from across the UrbanShift network and to ensure that urban issues are present in global environmental and development discussions,” said Sharon Gil, Cities Lead at UNEP.

At a high level, UrbanShift’s advocacy efforts aimed to channel the strength of its partner organizations into pushing for concrete progress around cities’ representation in global climate negotiations. To bring this vision to life, UrbanShift developed an overarching five-year advocacy strategy that consisted of yearly plans, each organized around a core theme. Over the course of the past five years, UrbanShift organized over 30 events that reached over 10,000 stakeholders, often at key climate convenings like COP or World Urban Forum. Through this work, UrbanShift contributed to shaping major global efforts like CHAMP and the Urban SDG Finance Commission. “But numbers are only part of the equation,” said Elsa Lefèvre, program manager for UNEP’s Cities program. “A lot of the outcomes are less quantifiable but no less significant. For instance, our efforts have contributed to the growing conversations around the importance of multi-level governance, broadening access to finance for cities, and elevating the value of nature-based solutions for cities.”

While UrbanShift’s advocacy around these issues has helped move the needle, the effort has not been without challenges. From launching UrbanShift during the COVID-19 pandemic, which delayed and complicated implementation of on-the-ground efforts, to upheaval in global geopolitics, the program has had to remain nimble and ensure it’s responding to both overarching issues and of-the-moment needs. But within this disruption, said Gulnara Roll, Head of the Cities Unit at UNEP, there have been opportunities for action. “There has been strong momentum for local action, as national processes sometimes stall,” she said.

While recognition has grown around the importance of empowering cities to act, securing adequate financing for cities to realize their potential remains a challenge. In response, UrbanShift’s advocacy team ensured that one of the annual themes revolved specifically around broadening access to urban climate finance. “In selecting the themes, we look to global trends and also consult with the UrbanShift partners about what they want to prioritize for the year,” Gil said. “It was essential

that we followed the conversation and built on opportunities that arose over the course of the program.” In deciding to dedicate a year of advocacy around urban climate finance, UrbanShift was able to build on the “global momentum to strengthen the role of local and regional governments in international processes and create the enabling conditions for them to take ambitious action,” Lefèvre added.

Change does not happen overnight, nor is it the result of one organization’s efforts.

But “since the start of UrbanShift, there has been a clear and growing recognition of cities as essential actors in addressing the triple planetary crisis—climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution,” said Roll. “The conversation has evolved from viewing cities as implementers of national policies to recognizing them as co-creators of global solutions, capable of driving innovation, ambition, and impact.” As the UrbanShift Global Platform concludes, the groundwork laid through its advocacy effort will continue to push this vital conversation forward.





ADVOCACY

Led by UNEP, UrbanShift engaged in many key advocacy moments this year to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities on the path to sustainable cities, and of the importance of placing cities at the heart of the global environmental agenda. With an emphasis on effective multi-level governance mechanisms and increased financing flows, UrbanShift events provided a platform for city and national stakeholders to exchange experiences, foster collaboration and translate global goals into local actions. In doing so, UrbanShift and its partners have also helped shape the global agenda on multilevel governance and urban resilience, particularly by elevating the issue of extreme heat as a critical urban challenge.



ADVOCACY EVENTS:

- **October 27, 2024**
CBD COP16
Cali, Colombia
- **November 6, 2024**
World Urban Forum
Cairo, Egypt
- **February 17-19, 2025**
Green & Resilient UrbanShift Africa Forum
Nairobi, Kenya
- **June 30 – July 3, 2025**
4th International Conference on Financing for Development
Sevilla, Spain
- **November 10-21, 2025**
UNFCCC COP30
Belém, Brazil
- **December 5, 2025**
UNEA-7 Cities and Regions Summit
Nairobi, Kenya



The success of UrbanShift’s advocacy efforts is an example of the power of partnership.

By bringing together the voices of our four core partners and amplifying them through a unified platform, we’ve been able to deliver impactful messages on global stages. Backed by the support of the Global Environment Facility and grounded in real examples from cities in the program, UrbanShift has helped elevate urban issues on the global agenda and demonstrate what’s possible when collaboration drives change.

ELSA LEFÈVRE,
PROGRAM MANAGER, CITIES UNIT,
UNEP

CAI, COLOMBIA

October 27, 2024

CITIES LEADING THE WAY TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE TARGETS OF KMGBF

Convened in Cali, Colombia, from 21 October to 1 November, CBD COP16 took stock of progress in implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF). In recognition of cities as both the major contributors and the solution to biodiversity loss, the UrbanShift event, held in the GEF Pavilion as an official parallel event of the COP, focused on how cities were leading the way and demonstrating concrete ways to implement Target 12 of KMGBF on “enhancing green spaces and urban planning for human well-being and biodiversity.” The event invited GEF cities, including those under UrbanShift, and *Generation Restoration Cities* to share their transformative actions to address challenges, discuss shortcomings encountered and reflect on what to do to increase financing flows for nature.

CAIRO, EGYPT

November 6, 2024

SPOTLIGHT ON URBANSHIFT AT THE WORLD URBAN FORUM

Held in Cairo, Egypt, between 4 and 8 November, the 12th session of the World Urban Forum (WUF) convened over 25,000 participants from 182 countries. Building on the momentum of the *Pact for the Future* adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2024, WUF underscored the urgency of collective action to localize the Sustainable Development Goals. Against this backdrop, UNEP and UrbanShift partners led a side event under the theme “Scaling Up Financing for an Urban Shift towards Nature-positive and Climate-resilient Cities.” Focused on the role of national governments in unlocking financing for local governments, representatives of UrbanShift cities, countries and partners exchanged experiences around operationalizing national-level policies and processes and seeking international financing to support sustainable urbanization.

URBANSHIFT LOOKS BACK: ON UNITING DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Cities hold significant potential to accelerate progress on climate action. But too often, they are left to the sidelines in global climate conversations.

“We’ve heard from quite a few city officials that before participating in UrbanShift events, they had not been able to connect with national government officials in their own country,” said Matheus Ortega, Senior Manager for Climate Action in C40’s UrbanShift team. “But through UrbanShift, they could not only meet, but also discuss collaboration on important and cross-cutting progress.” There is so much value, added Viola Follini, Senior Project Manager in C40’s UrbanShift team, “in breaking down siloes and working across cities, across departments, and across levels of government.”

Through UrbanShift, C40 has managed a diverse array of efforts, from supporting urban climate action planning, to accelerating collaboration between the public and private sectors, to advancing peer learning and innovative finance opportunities. With a view to encourage collaboration across sectors and levels of government, C40 has encouraged stakeholders to understand that climate action requires collective effort.

A core part of C40’s work has revolved around creating resources that invite more diverse stakeholders into the climate action conversation. In November 2024, C40, in collaboration with UrbanShift and Community Jameel, launched a [Climate Action Guide for Urban Planners](#), a multi-lingual resource designed to guide urban planners and practitioners through how to effectively infuse climate action into the development

of comprehensive plans. “It’s getting a lot of attention and demonstrating that there’s an enormous appetite for deeper learning and involvement in climate action, in many forms,” Ortega said.

Engaging the private sector, added Emily White, city-business engagement manager with C40, has also been critical. In 2023, C40 and UrbanShift launched a robust [guide to public-private collaboration](#), focused on Global South cities, which highlights different modes of partnership and points to innovative pathways for collaborative climate action. “It’s been exciting to see the transformation in how cities talk about this,” said White. “At first, the focus was on investment opportunities or public-private partnerships to solve a funding gap. But now, they’re thinking about skills, about what knowledge the private sector can bring to innovation, about how they can change procurement processes to broaden the kinds of solutions they have access to.”

Direct engagement with cities and urban stakeholders has also been core to C40’s work. In this area, too, there’s been a notable shift in the conversation over the course of the project. UrbanShift, said Anelise Rosa, City Finance Implementation Program Manager with C40, has engaged with Brazilian cities several times over the course of the program around innovative strategies for financing adaptation projects. “Not only have we seen conversations around financing these specific projects moving



ahead—we’ve also seen a heightened awareness within cities around the role of nature-based solutions for climate adaptation and resilience,” she said. “It was exciting to see more mayors in Brazil talking about nature-based solutions in the lead-up to COP30 this year.”

The [Green & Resilient UrbanShift Africa Forum](#) in February 2025, added Amaia Leonet, C40 Sustainable Investment Programme Project Officer, created a space for representatives from a wide range of African cities to connect. “These cities are making amazing climate progress, and it’s really powerful to see them coming together and stepping up.” In advance of the Forum, C40 convened 23 African mayors to sign onto an [open letter](#) calling for urgent action to unlock climate finance. “We’re still getting loads of momentum and interest in signing on after the event, and I think that it’s because

UrbanShift and the Forum offered a massive and welcoming platform for the message,” she added.

The steady drumbeat of cross-sectoral collaboration and engagement that C40 has built over the course of UrbanShift signals growing momentum in the climate action space. “Seeing mayors sign onto public commitments at UrbanShift Forums or articulate their city’s vision for climate action publicly,” Rosa said, “really brings home and highlights the value of the more technical work that we do. We spend so much time in conference rooms working with city officials on very technical projects and strategic plans, and it can be a long time before this work sees the light of day. But to see a mayor acknowledge this work on the stage shows that this work isn’t just theoretical—it has political backing and a path to implementation.”



CITY-BUSINESS COLLABORATION

Cities are central to the global response to the climate, nature and wellbeing crises. However, city governments cannot solve urban sustainability challenges by working alone. Collaboration, especially between cities, communities and businesses, becomes the bridge that connects ideas with action. UrbanShift supports cities to collaborate with the private sector in the following ways:

CITY-BUSINESS HUBS

In these global events, UrbanShift convenes city and business leaders to discuss the most pressing regional challenges and ways of addressing them in partnership.



CITY-BUSINESS CLIMATE ALLIANCE WORKSHOPS

These workshops provide a platform for cities and leaders of local business networks to exchange ideas on how to accelerate local climate action through public-private collaboration. In the CBCA Workshops, the UrbanShift team supports cities to use their formal and soft powers to influence and collaborate with the private sector to achieve ambitious climate action.

During the Green & Resilient UrbanShift Africa Forum, C40 hosted a CBCA Workshop and a Cities & Business networking event to accelerate collaboration between the public and private sectors in Africa. Delivered in partnership with the Nairobi Climate Network, this final CBCA Workshop offered representatives from Lagos, Tshwane, Johannesburg, Marrakech and Nairobi an opportunity to present how they are partnering with businesses to deliver climate action locally.



JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA October 17, 2025

BRINGING THE PRIVATE SECTOR INTO THE EFFORT TO IMPROVE WASTE MANAGEMENT

In partnership with the City of Johannesburg Department of Economic Development and the South African Local Government Association, ICLEI Africa gathered around 50 stakeholders for the Johannesburg City-Business Collaboration Accelerator Workshop to focus on the challenge of sustainable solid waste management, circular value chains and quality public spaces. The Waste Management & Regulation Directorate outlined the City’s major obstacles and priorities, while eight participating businesses pitched innovative proposals to a panel of judges for feedback and selection of the top three.

Subsequent thematic table discussions between businesses and city officials reaffirmed the City’s enthusiasm for private sector innovations, and identified specific focus areas, enablers and gaps in moving public–private collaboration beyond ad hoc initiatives. Businesses and municipal officials alike emphasized the need for more such forums

focused on open-ended dialogue, walking away with improved mutual understanding. Moving forward, certain businesses have already taken the initiative of following up on discussions with key municipal focal points. City officials expressed a keen interest in pursuing funding for pilot projects with several businesses—demonstrable examples that can catalyze institutional shifts to enable truly systematic, large-scale public-private partnerships in Johannesburg’s waste sector.

The eight businesses that participated were:

- African Reclaimers Organisation
- The Compost Kitchen
- Final Signature Services
- Khepri Innovations
- Love Our City Klean
- Purpose Recycling SA
- TTR Waste Solutions
- Urban Farm Technology

CITY-BUSINESS COLLABORATION ACCELERATOR (CIBIX)

The City-Business Collaboration Accelerator (CiBiX), led by ICLEI, is an ideation workshop program that brings cities and businesses together to define challenges and identify collaborative and innovative urban sustainability solutions. CiBiX workshops increase cross-sectoral understanding of opportunities in the climate action space and encourage integrated approaches to program development and implementation.



CLIMATE ACTION PLANNING

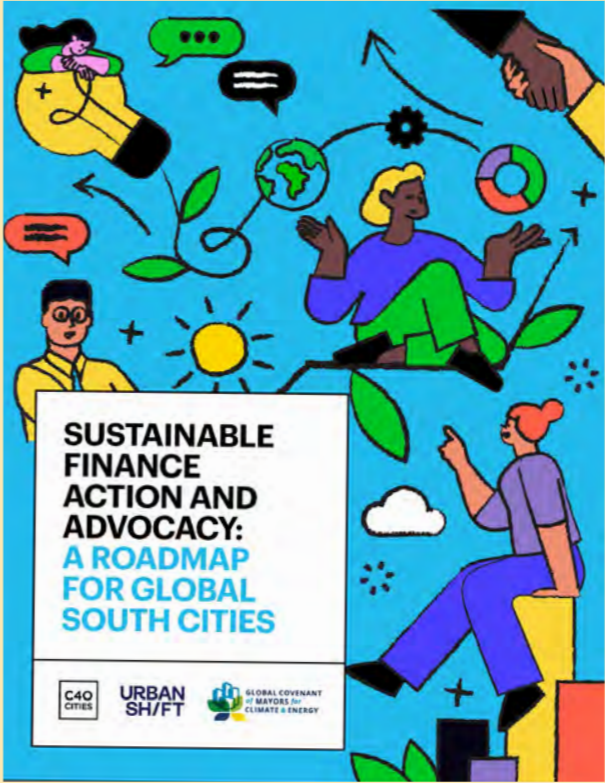
The UrbanShift team provides a range of tailored support and guidance to cities to address the climate crisis at the local level through declarations, initiatives and mayoral leadership. UrbanShift's partnership with cities contributes to how they shape their climate action plans and connect with peer cities working toward similar bold goals.



“Effective planning is at the heart of impactful climate action. The *Climate Action Guide for Urban Planners*, launched by C40,

UrbanShift, and Community Jameel, has reached more than 15,000 readers across 156 countries. The message is clear: there is no future in urban planning without climate — and no future for climate action without good urban planning.

MATHEUS ORTEGA,
CLIMATE ACTION SENIOR MANAGER,
C40 CITIES



A GUIDE FOR SUSTAINABLE FINANCE ACTION IN GLOBAL SOUTH CITIES

Launched at the Green & Resilient UrbanShift Africa Forum, the *Sustainable Finance Action and Advocacy: A Roadmap for Global South Cities* provides a strategic blueprint for city leaders to take action and advocate for more accessible and effective climate finance. Developed in partnership by C40, UrbanShift, and the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM), the Roadmap outlines practical steps that mayors can take to advance sustainable finance, both within their own administrations and through targeted engagement with key financial and policy stakeholders.

The Roadmap meets a critical need: While cities in the Global South are on the frontlines of climate impacts, they often struggle to access finance for transformative infrastructure and services. The Roadmap equips cities with the tools and narratives to close that gap, grounded in extensive consultations with city officials, expert interviews and research into climate finance bottlenecks and opportunities.

Organized around five priority themes, the Roadmap begins by urging cities to make climate a strategic priority through integrated planning, climate budgeting, alignment with green finance standards, and engagement with local institutional investors such as pension funds. To strengthen internal capacity, the Roadmap recommends creating dedicated Climate



Finance Units, offering tailored training for officials, and developing investment-ready project pipelines.

A key barrier to climate action remains the lack of private capital flowing into urban projects. To combat this, the Roadmap outlines how cities can mobilize private investment through procurement, blended finance mechanisms and efforts to improve creditworthiness. Improved national frameworks, the Roadmap notes, can also provide support—cities should advocate for fiscal decentralization and enhanced subnational access to finance.

Lastly, the Roadmap calls on cities to unite their voices to demand more concessional finance from Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and global climate funds, and to push national governments to shift public finance away from fossil fuels and towards green, resilient investments.

The *Open Letter*, signed by over 20 African mayors (read more on page 61), accompanied the launch of the Roadmap at the Forum. Addressed to African Ministers of Finance, the letter highlights the urgent need for expanded access to urban climate finance. This call to action exemplifies how cities can use coordinated political leadership to influence systemic change and elevate urban climate action on the global finance agenda. Both the Roadmap and the open letter demonstrate the strength of city leadership in shaping the future of sustainable finance and advancing a cleaner, more equitable urban future across the Global South.

URBANSHIFT LOOKS BACK: ON STRENGTHENING MULTI- LEVEL COLLABORATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

For transformative climate action and sustainable development to take root in cities, coordination is essential—across sectors and siloes, but also across levels of government.

“We noticed, from a climate action perspective, that there is often a disconnect between national and local governments, with no formal coordination or communication process around sustainable urban development,” said Maryke van Staden, Director of ICLEI’s carbonn Climate Center. During the design phase of the UrbanShift project, the team identified an opportunity within this lack to ensure that UrbanShift included a mechanism to connect national and local government representatives and build alignment around climate and sustainability goals.

“The National-Local Dialogues were developed as a space where leaders from national and subnational governments could have frank, constructive, closed-door conversations,” van Staden added. “This would make sure they could align, from the beginning of the project, around what the local governments wanted to accomplish and where there were opportunities for national governments to enhance support around policy and implementation.”

ICLEI, whose network spans over 2,500 cities across over 125 countries, has spearheaded national-local collaboration through the UrbanShift project. However, it’s essential to note that collaboration was not the end goal of this line of work—rather, the Dialogues and the efforts to align priorities across local

and national governments all have fed into UrbanShift’s overarching aim of supporting local implementation of transformative projects.

ICLEI’s starting point in facilitating the National-Local Dialogues “is always to ask the local governments what topics they want to put on the table for discussion with their national government,” van Staden added, reversing the common top-down approach for priority-setting within countries. Empowering the cities to lead with their top concerns has served as a generative starting point for tangible local actions. In Indonesia, for instance, local leaders raised the need to align around waste management with the national government. Responsibility for managing waste often devolves to the cities, which expressed a need for stronger enabling frameworks and processes at the national level. “Approaching this topic collectively through the Dialogue allowed the national and city representatives to co-define a multi-level plan of action and ensure continued alignment and shared goals,” van Staden said.

Out of each Dialogue, the local and national representatives co-created a Roadmap to guide implementation and action around the agreed-upon priorities. This process, said Alyssa Chenault, UrbanShift Global Manager for ICLEI, has given leaders a tangible path to maintaining

momentum from the Dialogues outside of the walls of the meeting rooms. “In Morocco, through their first National-Local Dialogue, stakeholders actually developed a compact around circular development in the country,” Chenault said. “In essence, they transformed our concept of a roadmap and used it as a framework to secure cross-sectoral and cross-governmental buy-in around advancing circular

systems in the country.”

While the UrbanShift Global Platform is concluding, the connections and mechanisms built through the National-Local Dialogues will contribute to ongoing shared efforts to advance sustainable development—and provide a model for ensuring greater alignment for cities and countries around the world.





NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUES

Coordination across levels of government is essential for making progress on integrated and equitable urban development. UrbanShift’s National-Local Dialogues provided a convening space for different levels of government and departments within a country and facilitated constructive discussions on national policies for sustainable urban planning and financing. For each country, UrbanShift hosted two National-Local Dialogues.

NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUES:

- **October 16, 2024**
Second National-Local Dialogue for China
Wuhan, China
- **March 11, 2025**
Second National-Local Dialogue for Rwanda
Kigali, Rwanda
- **March 18, 2025**
Second National-Local Dialogue for Costa Rica
Barva, Costa Rica
- **May 13-15, 2025**
Workshop on Planning, Informality, and Waste Management for Sierra Leone
Freetown, Sierra Leone
- **June 10-11, 2025**
Second National-Local Dialogue for Brazil
Teresina, Brazil
- **October 1, 2025**
Second National-Local Dialogue for Indonesia
Jakarta, Indonesia
- **October 8-9, 2025**
Second National-Local Dialogue for India
New Delhi, India
- **October 23, 2025**
Second National-Local Dialogue for Morocco
Rabat, Morocco

HOW URBANSHIFT HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE NEXT PHASE OF NDCS

Local and subnational governments are increasingly recognized as key actors in addressing the triple planetary crisis, delivering solutions where global efforts might be stalling. UrbanShift has strengthened multilevel governance by fostering collaboration between national and local actors, enabling cities to contribute meaningfully to national climate goals through capacity building, project development, and access to finance.

Through its National-Local Dialogues, UrbanShift has facilitated alignment of urban priorities with national strategies – from transit-oriented development in India to circular economy planning in Morocco and flood resilience in Costa Rica. In Rwanda, UrbanShift supported consultations for NDC 3.0, helping local governments articulate climate priorities and co-develop a roadmap with national authorities. In Indonesia, dialogues focused on climate finance and gender-smart investment.

Argentina’s dialogue showcased integrated low-carbon investments across five cities.

UrbanShift’s advocacy activities have contributed to elevating the importance of multi-level governance on the global agenda. This momentum culminated with the creation of the Coalition of High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships (CHAMP), now endorsed by 75 countries and leading to stronger involvement of subnational governments in the NDC 3.0. In Brazil, the updated NDC explicitly recognizes the role of states and municipalities, marking a significant step forward for multilevel climate governance.

UrbanShift has also helped raise ambition at the local level: 12 cities joined the Cities Race to Zero, Freetown and Teresina signed the UN’s Subnational Cooling Pledge, and Belém committed to expanding green space and equitable access through C40’s Urban Nature Accelerator.

9 TERESINA, BRAZIL June 10-11, 2025

On June 10–11, Teresina hosted the 2nd National Dialogue on Metropolitan and Interfederative Governance, a gathering that brought together ministries, municipalities, research institutions and international organizations to advance cooperation across levels of government on promoting sustainable urban development. Organized under the UrbanShift Program and the CITInova II Project, the event highlighted the urgent need to strengthen governance structures capable of addressing climate change, urban mobility and social inequality in Brazil’s metropolitan regions.

Already, work is underway across the regions to address local challenges. Lucas Soares, Secretary of Planning of Timon, shared how the long-awaited “Fourth Bridge” connecting Teresina and Timon would not be possible without cross-governmental coordination. But participants agreed that more coordinated efforts are needed.

Through participation in collaborative workshops, participants advanced regional visions for Belém, Florianópolis and the Teresina-Timon agglomeration, identifying priorities such as integrated mobility, green infrastructure and mechanisms to ensure citizen participation.

The Dialogue produced three main outcomes: A commitment to strengthen interfederative cooperation through metropolitan councils and consortia; concrete regional agendas for Belém, Florianópolis and Teresina-Timon; and national-level recommendations to integrate metropolitan governance into Brazil’s forthcoming Urban Development Policy.

As Marcel Sant’Anna of the Ministry of Cities reminded participants, “Shared governance is not an option—it is the only path to face contemporary urban challenges.” The Teresina Dialogue demonstrated that when different spheres of government, local leaders and global partners sit at the same table, solutions emerge that are both visionary and grounded. The challenge ahead is to transform these dialogues into lasting frameworks—ensuring that cooperation across borders, jurisdictions and political cycles becomes the norm rather than the exception.



“UrbanShift’s National Local Dialogues

put national and local leaders in the same room to gain alignment. Participants left with shared priorities, clear roles, and a path to funding, so climate projects moved from idea to delivery more quickly.

MARYKE VAN STADEN,
DIRECTOR,
CARBONN CLIMATE CENTER



MONITORING & EVALUATION

UrbanShift Program Results Framework and Indicators

UrbanShift includes ten projects: nine country-led projects that support local investments and pilot initiatives in participating cities (see page 20), and one global project (platform) that provides capacity building and technical support for implementation (see page 58). Together, these projects aim to generate benefits for people, biodiversity, and climate change mitigation.

To support biodiversity, the program will restore or improve the management of 1.24 million hectares of terrestrial and/or marine areas. Eighty percent of this target has been achieved, with significant progress reported in China, Costa Rica, Morocco and Sierra Leone.

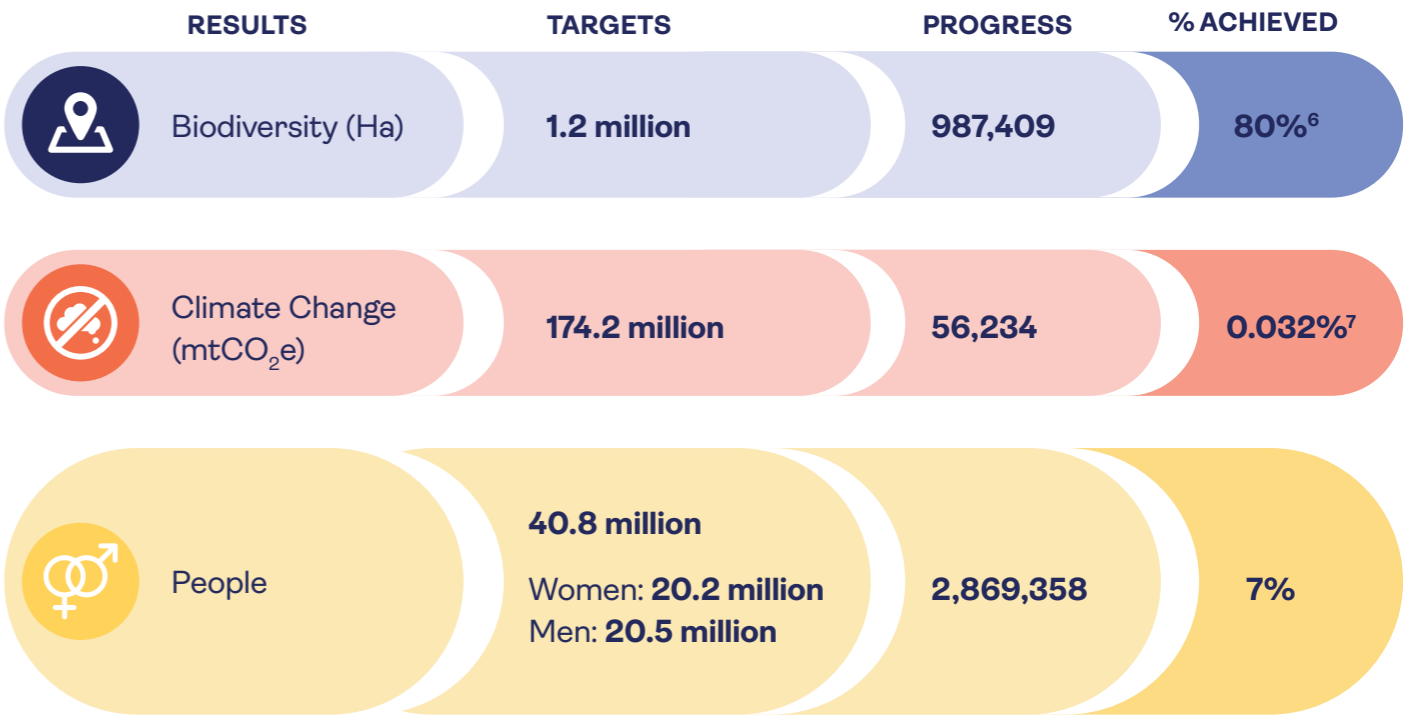
To support climate change mitigation efforts, the program will promote adoption of integrated urban development approaches, which includes efforts such as developing more sustainable and climate-friendly neighborhoods and buildings, enhanced energy efficiency and low-carbon mobility, development of low-emission zones, and managing urban growth and sprawl thereby avoiding the release of more than 174 million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent. Progress has been reported in Costa Rica and Sierra Leone.

And overall, UrbanShift will improve the lives and livelihoods of more than 40 million people around the world, half of whom are female. Seven percent of this target has been achieved, with improved lives for local residents reported by Costa Rica, Morocco and Rwanda.

Figure 1 shows the target impacts for the overall program and progress achieved by the end of June 2025.

FIGURE 1:

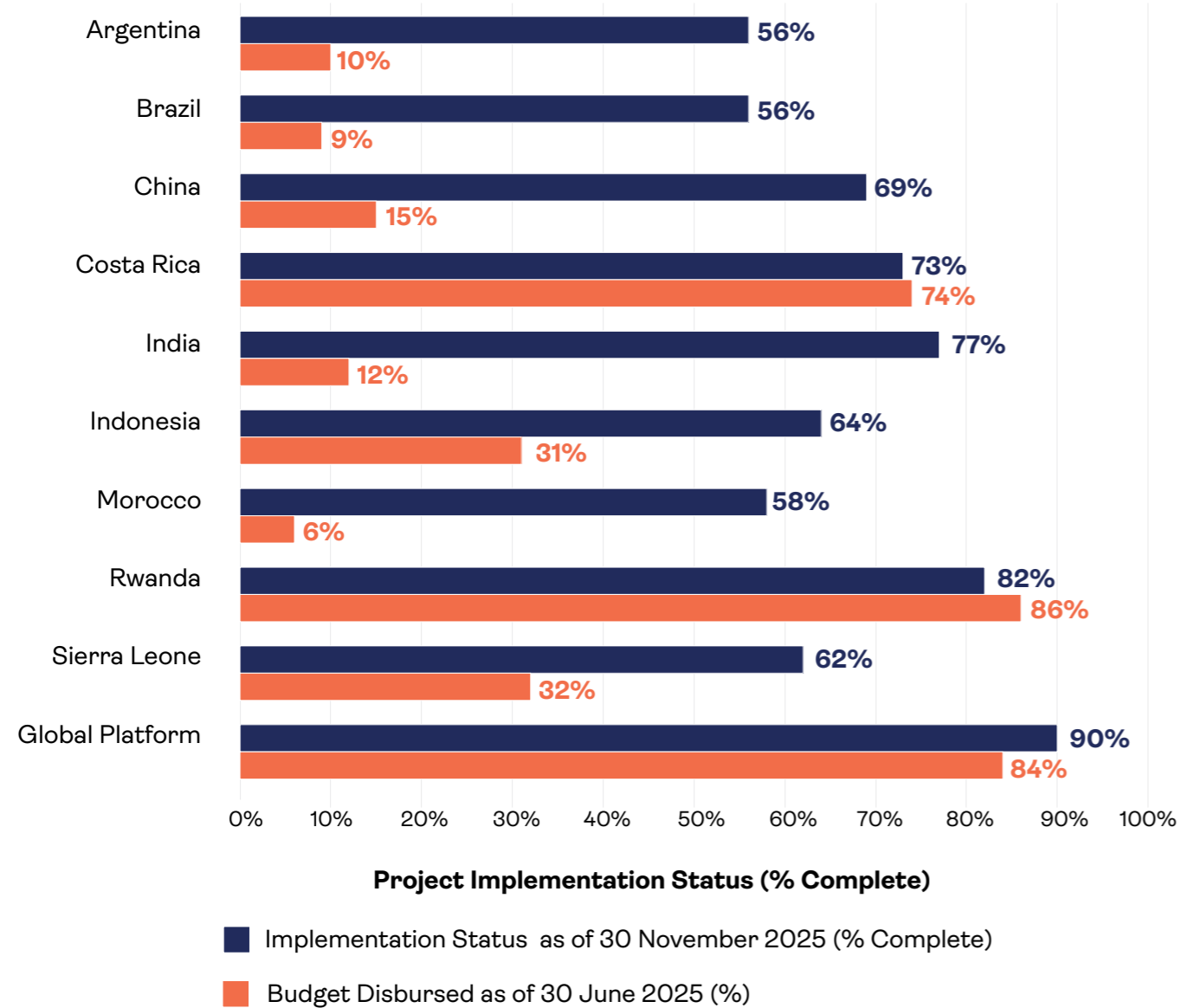
UrbanShift Global Program Impact Targets



^{6,7} See the Annex on page 108 for footnotes.

Progress against the core impact indicator targets is directly correlated with the maturity of the country projects and the Global Platform. Figure 2 shows the implementation and budget utilization status of all 10 projects. Low budget disbursement suggests that meaningful implementation work is yet to begin. It is likely, given relatively low budget disbursement rates and implementation status in some countries, that the projects will be extended to allow full completion of planned activities and utilization of grant funds⁸.

FIGURE 2:
Implementation and Budget Disbursement Status of the GEF-7 SCIP projects



To measure progress toward the three core impact indicator targets, the UrbanShift Program uses a flexible Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) results framework that the country-led projects can adapt for their individual contexts and priorities. The UrbanShift Program Results Framework (Figure 3) is structured around four components that each correspond to an outcome—a positive change in the world, at least partially attributed to UrbanShift. Corresponding indicators measure progress toward these outcomes. Progress as of November 2025 can be found in Figure 4.

⁸ See the Annex on page 108 for footnotes.

FIGURE 3:
UrbanShift Program Results Framework and Indicators

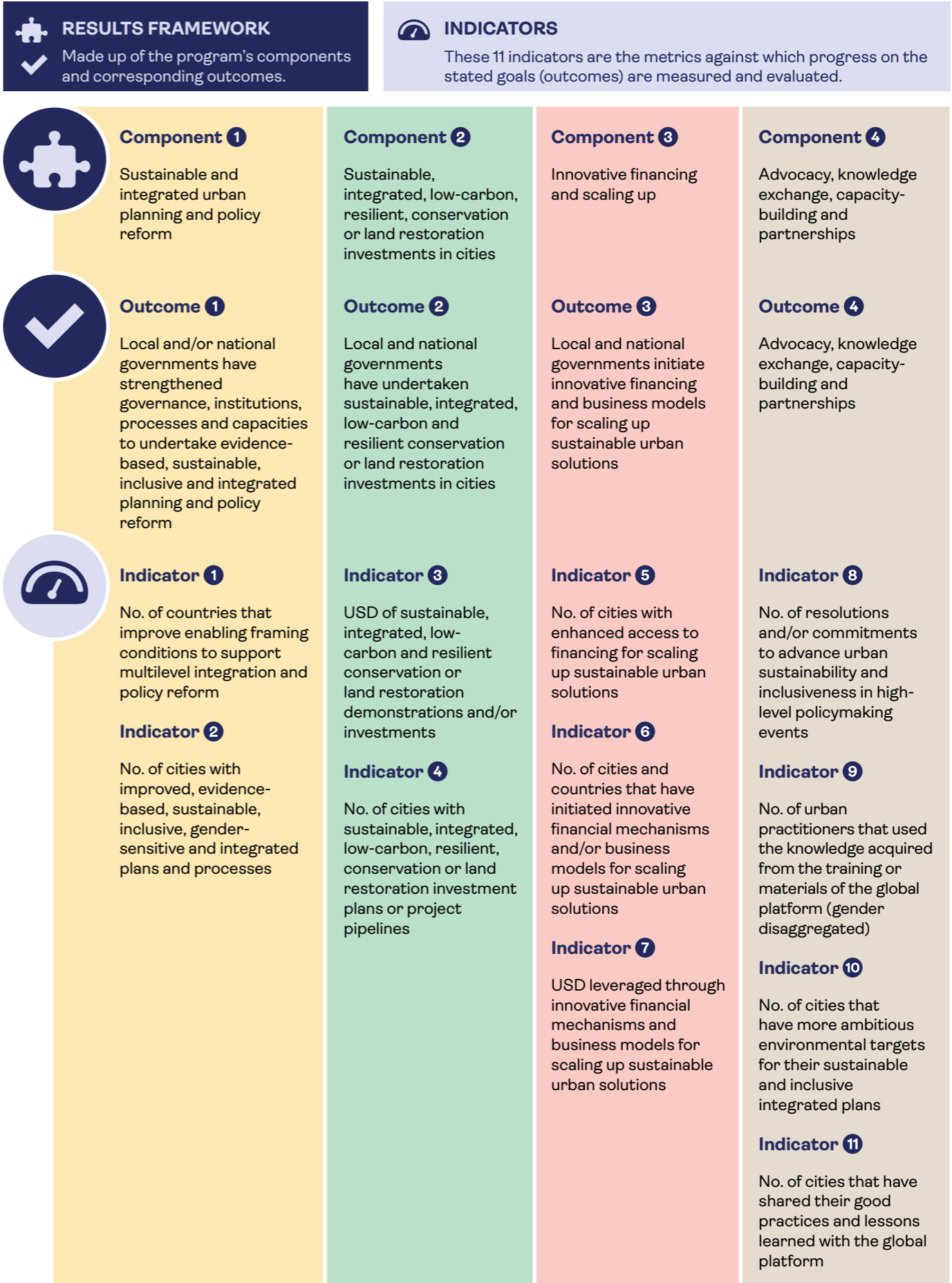



FIGURE 4:

Progress achieved as of November 2025 by the country-led and global platform projects, relative to the overall UrbanShift program indicators

 Components	 Indicators	Global Platform	Argentina
1 Sustainable and integrated urban planning and policy reform	1. No. of countries that improve enabling framing conditions to support multilevel integration and policy reform		1 country
	2. No. of cities with improved, evidence-based, sustainable, inclusive, gender-sensitive and integrated plans and processes	10 cities ⁱ	4 cities ⁱⁱ
2 Sustainable, integrated, low-carbon and resilient conservation or land restoration investments in cities	3. USD of sustainable, integrated, low-carbon and resilient conservation or land restoration demonstrations and/or investments		
	4. No. of cities with sustainable, integrated, low-carbon and resilient, conservation or land restoration investment plans or project pipelines		5 cities ^{xvi}
3 Innovative financing and scaling up	5. No. of cities with enhanced access to financing for scaling up sustainable urban solutions	4 cities ^{xxiv}	
	6. No. of cities and countries that have initiated innovative financial mechanisms and/or business models for scaling up sustainable urban solutions	8 cities ^{xxviii}	
	7. USD leveraged through innovative financial mechanisms and business models for scaling up sustainable urban solutions		
4 Advocacy, knowledge exchange, capacity-building and partnerships	8. No. of resolutions and/or commitments to advance urban sustainability and inclusiveness in high-level policymaking events	13 resolutions ^{xxxiv}	
	9. No. of urban practitioners that used the knowledge acquired from the training or materials of the global platform (gender disaggregated)	989 course completions ^{xxxvii}	1,550 practitioners ^{xxxviii}
	10. No. of cities that have more ambitious environmental targets for their sustainable and inclusive integrated plans	6 ^{xliii}	
	11. No. of cities that have shared their good practices and lessons learned with the global platform	50 best practices ^{xlviii}	

ⁱ⁻ⁱⁱ See the Annex on page 108 for footnotes.

Brazil	China	Costa Rica	India	Indonesia	Morocco	Rwanda	Sierra Leone
1 country	1 country	1 country	1 country	1 country	1 country	1 country	1 country
3 cities ⁱⁱⁱ	3 cities ^{iv}	20 municipalities ^v	4 cities ^{vi}	1 city ^{vii}	1 city ^{viii}	1 city ^{ix}	
USD \$25 million ^x	USD 24 million ^{xi}	USD 5 million ^{xii}	USD 2 million ^{xiii}		USD 177 million ^{xiv}		USD 14.5 million ^{xv}
3 cities ^{xvii}	3 cities ^{xviii}	20 municipalities ^{xix}	2 cities ^{xx}	1 city ^{xxi}	1 city ^{xxii}		5 cities ^{xxiii}
3 cities ^{xxv}		3 cities ^{xxvi}			1 city ^{xxvii}		
1 city ^{xxix}	2 cities ^{xxx}	6 cities ^{xxxi}	2 cities ^{xxxii}		1 city ^{xxxiii}		
1 national commitment ^{xxxv}		12 agreements and commitments ^{xxxvi}					
257 practitioners ^{xxxix}		1,500 practitioners ^{xl}	153 practitioners ^{xli}				750 practitioners ^{xlii}
		20 municipalities ^{xliii}	2 cities ^{xliii}	1 city ^{xliii}		1 city ^{xliii}	
7 ^{xlix}			3 cities ^l		1 city ^{li}		

PROGRESS TOWARD ACHIEVING THE URBANSHIFT OUTCOMES

Since the beginning of the UrbanShift Program in 2021, progress against the indicators and towards achieving the outcomes has been tracked through yearly Annual Report questionnaires and project reporting documents, mid-term evaluation reports (where available⁹), and regular ongoing engagement between country project and global platform teams.

The information below details this progress in an effort to showcase the impact of the UrbanShift Program to date. In a few cases where country-led projects have not yet advanced sufficiently with on-the-ground implementation to provide quantified progress against their indicators, qualitative and anecdotal evidence of impact has been used to describe progress.¹⁰



Outcome 1: Local and/or national governments have strengthened governance, institutions, processes and capacities to undertake evidence-based, sustainable, inclusive and integrated planning and policy reform

INDICATOR 1: NO. OF COUNTRIES THAT IMPROVE ENABLING FRAMING CONDITIONS TO SUPPORT MULTILEVEL INTEGRATION AND POLICY REFORM

- In Brazil, the national “Green and Resilient Cities Program” has been created through a collaboration between the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Cities to support adaptation projects in vulnerable urban areas. This initiative integrates environmental, urban and climate policy objectives to demonstrate how national-level policy reform can strengthen the conditions for sustainable urban development.
- In the San José Greater Metropolitan Area (Costa Rica), 12 multi-sectoral agreements on mobility, biodiversity, urban green strategies and circular economy have been developed, and 20 regulatory reforms (laws, decrees, municipal regulations) have been advanced, six of which have been approved. These reforms strengthen enabling frameworks for sustainability at both local and national levels.
- In India, the country project’s steering committee meeting held in September 2024 brought together the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the National Institute of Urban Affairs, and representatives from Pune, Surat, Puducherry and Chennai to strengthen alignment between national, state, and city institutions, improving enabling conditions for integrated and resilient urban policy reform.
- In Rwanda, the new implementation strategy for the 2015 National Urbanization Policy was adopted by the Cabinet in February 2025. UrbanShift’s two national-local dialogues supported this effort by promoting multilevel integration to align Kigali’s priorities with national frameworks.

INDICATOR 2: NO. OF CITIES WITH IMPROVED, EVIDENCE-BASED, SUSTAINABLE, INCLUSIVE, GENDER-SENSITIVE AND INTEGRATED PLANS AND PROCESSES

- Cities in Argentina are advancing sustainable, low-carbon and climate-resilient urban development plans and projects. The Comprehensive Biodiversity and Ecosystem



Services Conservation Plan in Mar del Plata was developed through an intensive participatory process, producing 16 programs and 53 projects that integrate biodiversity into urban development models. Ushuaia has progressed on its Sustainable Ushuaia 2050 Plan, which guides more resilient urban growth. Buenos Aires is implementing low-emission green corridors, Mendoza is using geospatial data to balance growth with ecosystem conservation and Salta is developing transit-oriented green corridors that promote ecological connectivity.

- In the San José Greater Metropolitan Area, local governments have improved institutional and individual capacity by 65% (as measured using the UNDP capacity development scorecard) through 183 different actions and projects, including GIS adoption, new regulations (such as on urban tree management and open spaces), the Sustainable Urban Renewal Strategy, and gender-sensitive territorial interventions.
- In Morocco, the Marrakech Communal Action Plan (PAC) 2022–2027 was developed and officially adopted by the City Council in 2023, fully integrating sustainability objectives and incorporating activities from the Marrakech Sustainable City program. A Climate Action Plan is also under development that will further guide low-carbon development and resilience planning.
- In Chennai (India), the Kadapakkam Lake Restoration Project is integrating inclusivity and gender sensitivity by using Elderly, Women, Children and Differently-abled people (EWCD) friendly design such as safe pathways, lighting, toilets and accessible entry points. In addition, the project’s Gender Equity and Sensitivity Inclusion (GESI) Action Plan commits to at least 40% female participation in all capacity-building and knowledge-sharing activities. In Surat, the Resilient Coastal Zone Development Planning (RCZDP) project has integrated technical studies, expert guidance, and participatory consultations into its design. The baseline assessment phase included multiple site visits to capture seasonal coastal dynamics, and consultations with local communities and coastal management authorities in Bhimpore and Karaikal to inform both the physical design and governance recommendations for the nature-based solutions interventions.
- In Indonesia, Balikpapan is drafting its Regional Long-Term (2025–2045) and Medium-Term (2025–2029) Development Plans, embedding themes such as waste management, climate resilience, circular economy and sustainable transport.
- Kigali has updated its Master Plan (2020–2050) to integrate land use, resilience and inclusive mobility, and launched the Green City Kigali Concept Master Plan (2024). Six secondary cities are also preparing detailed area plans, reinforcing evidence-based, integrated urban planning.

Outcome 2: Local and national governments have undertaken sustainable, integrated, low-carbon and resilient conservation or land restoration investments in cities

INDICATOR 3: USD OF SUSTAINABLE, INTEGRATED, LOW-CARBON AND RESILIENT CONSERVATION OR LAND RESTORATION DEMONSTRATIONS AND/OR INVESTMENTS

- The “Green and Resilient Cities Program” in Brazil has mobilized \$25 million to fund ten projects that deploy nature-based solutions to address climate challenges in cities, presenting a concrete financial opportunity to scale conservation and restoration efforts in Brazilian cities.
- In Costa Rica, US\$5.8 million has been invested in green infrastructure, drainage, sidewalk greening, and flood prevention in the San José Greater Metropolitan Area. Through these investments, five biological corridors covering more than 17,000 hectares and peri-urban landscapes under improved management covering nearly 14,000 hectares are allowing the integration of biodiversity conservation and restoration into urban planning.
- The Marrakech Sustainable City project has helped to catalyze increased public and private investments across multiple sectors. For example, investments have grown to \$29.4 million in energy efficiency, to 39.1 million in waste management, to 10.5 million in water resource efficiency, to 84.3 million in sustainable transports, and to 13.7 million in biodiversity conservation and green space.
- In Freetown (Sierra Leone), US\$14.5 million has been disbursed for neighborhood and market upgrades, rainwater catchment systems and greening—all direct investments in low-carbon and resilient infrastructure. Around US\$58 million in total is planned to be allocated toward these projects in the future.



INDICATOR 4: NO. OF CITIES WITH SUSTAINABLE, INTEGRATED, LOW-CARBON AND RESILIENT CONSERVATION OR LAND RESTORATION INVESTMENT PLANS OR PROJECT PIPELINES

- In Teresina, the project has begun piloting nature-based solutions, including the city’s first rain garden and the launch of a local reforestation plan. These pilots are important to test methods on the ground, demonstrate the benefits for stormwater management and biodiversity, to build momentum for integrating nature into broader city planning, and can be replicated in other cities.
- Biodiversity strategies being developed for wetlands in Ningbo, Chongqing and Chengdu (all in China) are part of larger integrated plans in each city that present future conservation-focused investment opportunities.
- In Indonesia, Balikpapan’s circular economy pilot initiatives—including methane capture, biomass co-firing, composting and insect farming—are building pipelines for low-carbon, resilient infrastructure.
- In Sierra Leone, the development of flood risk assessment and management plans and neighborhood upgrading designs for secondary cities is underway, which will create a pipeline of resilient urban investment projects.



Outcome 3: Local and national governments initiate innovative financing and business models for scaling up sustainable urban solutions

INDICATOR 5: NO. OF CITIES WITH ENHANCED ACCESS TO FINANCING FOR SCALING UP SUSTAINABLE URBAN SOLUTIONS

- Between 2021–2024, the UrbanShift Global Platform received 25 eligible project applications to the Transformative Actions Program (TAP) from GEF-6, -7 and -8 participating cities. Of these, 14 have been approved into the TAP pipeline, which unlocks additional technical support and access to finance from project preparation facilities and financial partners. For example, three projects—an integrated bicycle network development project in Morón (Greater Buenos Aires, Argentina), a chipping and composting center to manage organic waste development project also in Morón and a project to develop a participatory methodology to revitalize public spaces with climate resilience and heritage preservation in mind, and to implement a pilot project to demonstrate the approach in Recife (Brazil)—have been connected with the Gap Fund to prepare applications for additional project preparation towards bankability.
- Nine cities have received technical support from UrbanShift Global Platform through the “light-touch technical assistance” offer to advance project bankability. For example, in Freetown, UrbanShift is providing support to explore various strategies to maximize the efficiency of council tax payment contributions for clean energy investment schemes. In Chennai, support is being provided to mobilize private finance that is needed to implement the goals outlined in the city’s Climate Action Plan.



INDICATOR 6: NO. OF CITIES AND COUNTRIES THAT HAVE INITIATED INNOVATIVE FINANCIAL MECHANISMS AND/OR BUSINESS MODELS FOR SCALING UP SUSTAINABLE URBAN SOLUTIONS

- In China, Ningbo and Chongqing are piloting green finance models and products to support low-carbon and biodiversity initiatives. Ningbo is advancing its biodiversity strategy, natural assets accounting, and piloting zero-carbon urban regeneration, while also initiating studies on green financial models and products alongside its Carbon Neutrality Roadmap. While Chongqing is testing near-zero carbon community regeneration, biodiversity protection in Bishan District, and a dedicated green finance study to channel investments into ecosystem services and carbon neutrality. Together, these pilots are creating replicable models of green finance to support low-carbon and biodiversity initiatives.
- In Pune, a dedicated Urban Transport Fund (UTF) is being developed that will enable the city to pool and reinvest revenues from sources such as parking fees, green taxes, and development charges into low-carbon transport infrastructure, thereby institutionalizing long-term finance for sustainable mobility. In Surat, the city has invested \$2.8 million in nature-based solutions along the Dumas Sea Face to enhance coastal resilience and is now exploring blended finance options for long-term maintenance.

INDICATOR 7: USD LEVERAGED THROUGH INNOVATIVE FINANCIAL MECHANISMS AND BUSINESS MODELS FOR SCALING UP SUSTAINABLE URBAN SOLUTIONS

- In Costa Rica, US\$53.4 million has been invested in sidewalks, parks, drainage, waste treatment and mobility solutions, all in alignment with the country’s National Decarbonization Plan. Additional trust funds that are being prepared offer potential further leveraged financing in the future.



Outcome 4: Advocacy, knowledge exchange, capacity-building and partnerships

INDICATOR 8: NO. OF RESOLUTIONS AND/OR COMMITMENTS TO ADVANCE URBAN SUSTAINABILITY AND INCLUSIVENESS IN HIGH-LEVEL POLICYMAKING EVENTS

- During the UrbanShift Global Platform's Africa Forum in February 2025, 18 Mayors signed an open letter to African Finance Ministers urging action on sustainable urban finance. The letter called on African national governments to prioritize investments in the green economy and climate resilience, strengthen municipal finance, and remove barriers to public-private partnerships to fast-track climate action projects at the local level. As of June 2025, 43 mayors and governors from multiple countries had signed the call to action.

INDICATOR 9: NO. OF URBAN PRACTITIONERS THAT USED THE KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED FROM THE TRAINING OR MATERIALS OF THE GLOBAL PLATFORM (GENDER DISAGGREGATED)

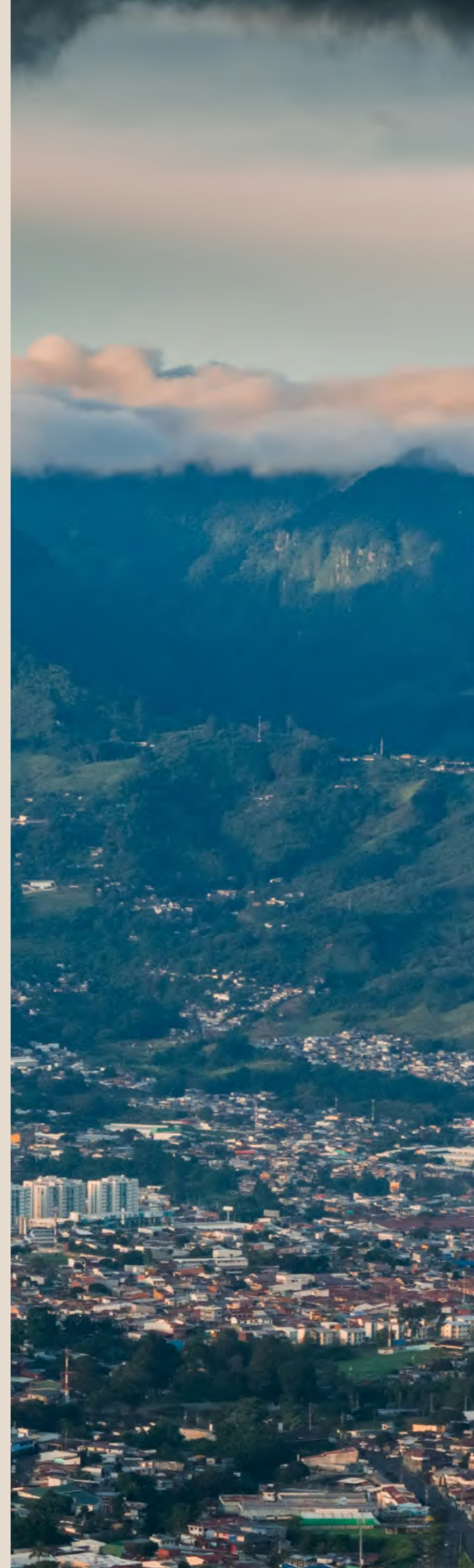
- In Brazil, a total of 257 people (57% female) have participated in training sessions, peer-to-peer exchanges, and other knowledge-building activities. Most participants are government officials and technical staff, meaning the project is directly building institutional capacity where decisions are made.
- In Freetown, training workshops such as the Tree Tracking Training of Trainers has engaged 750 community members, thereby strengthening local knowledge and capacity to manage and maintain trees and plants that are being planted across the city as part of the country project and the complementary Freetown the Treetown campaign.
- More than 7,500 people (42% female) have directly benefitted from the UrbanShift Global Platform by participating in UrbanShift's technical assistance and capacity building activities, advocacy events and webinars. In addition, 5,801 people (57% female) have registered to take one or more of the UrbanShift Online City Academy courses.

INDICATOR 10: NO. OF CITIES THAT HAVE MORE AMBITIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL TARGETS FOR THEIR SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE INTEGRATED PLANS

- The city of Balikpapan has set a city-wide target of 40% waste reduction and 60% waste management by 2045, with reporting from 2023 suggesting 23% waste reduction and 71% waste management achievements already.
- In Kigali, the city has embedded resilience, low-carbon mobility and gender responsiveness into its Master Plan (2020–2050) and Green City Kigali Plan. The revised National Urbanization Policy (2025) also reflects stronger environmental and inclusivity targets nationally.

INDICATOR 11: NO. OF CITIES THAT HAVE SHARED THEIR GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED WITH THE GLOBAL PLATFORM

- Local pilot projects being implemented in Teresina — including rain gardens and the city's reforestation plan — were directly inspired by UrbanShift peer-to-peer exchanges that took place in Rotterdam (October 2024) and Barranquilla (July 2023). By applying lessons from other cities, Teresina is showing how cross-city collaboration can translate global knowledge into local action.
- More than 50 best practices have been shared between cities through the UrbanShift Global Platform. For example, Kochi (India) shared how they are integrating nature-based solutions into their approach for climate planning—including earmarking 30% of the annual budget to implement nature-based solutions for climate resilience—during the UrbanShift webinar 'Enhancing Urban Infrastructure Resilience through Nature-Based Solutions in South Asian Cities' in November 2024. Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) shared their initiative on community waste management during the multi-stakeholder workshop on waste management organized for Freetown in May 2025. Jayapura (Indonesia) shared lessons learned and best practices on how it has been managing urban development while ensuring conservation of local natural resources for ecotourism during the UrbanShift Lab held in Bitung in May 2025. And Balikpapan has shared their circular economy practices (including on methane capture and utilization, composting and insect farming) with other cities during the UrbanShift City Academy on Circular Economy in August 2024.



FIVE YEARS, FIVE LESSONS

Over the past five years, UrbanShift has demonstrated that advancing sustainable and resilient cities requires more than isolated interventions. The program’s efforts across 23 cities and its global platform offer several lessons for the next generation of urban initiatives:

one.

INTEGRATED PLANNING DELIVERS MULTIPLE BENEFITS:

Cities that combined climate, biodiversity, and social objectives achieved more durable results than those pursuing sectoral solutions. Projects such as Chennai’s lake restoration or Kigali’s wetland rehabilitation showed how nature-based approaches can simultaneously reduce climate risks, improve ecosystems, and enhance community well-being.



two.

FINANCE IS A DECISIVE ENABLER:

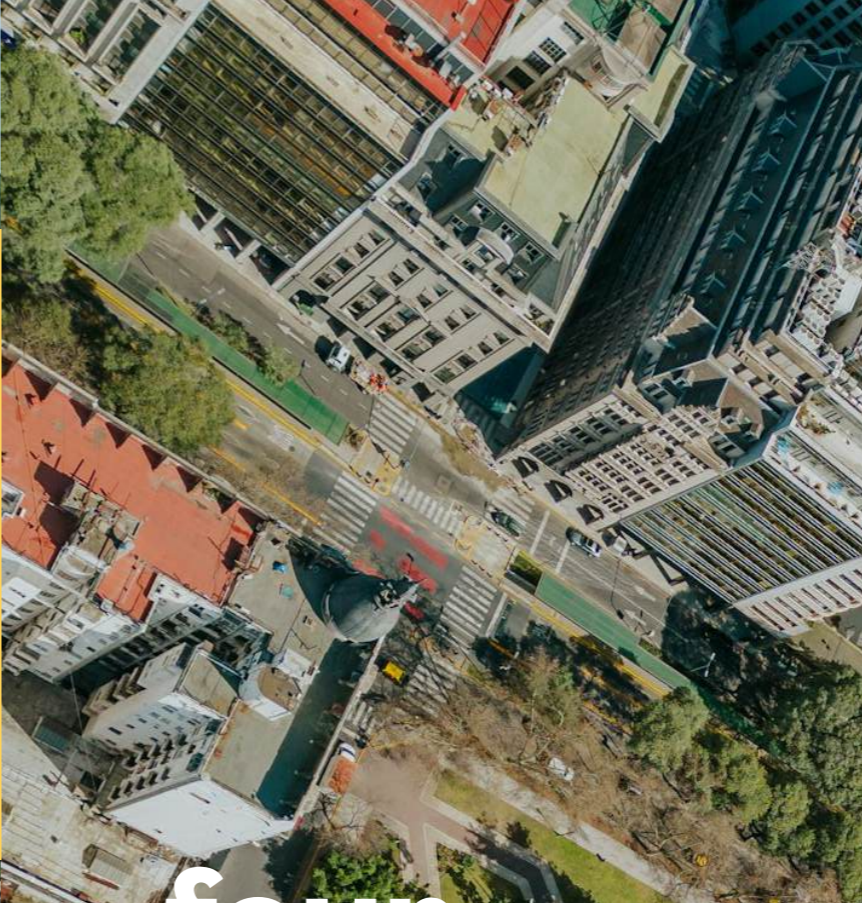
Technical assistance, training, and city-investor dialogues helped municipalities move from plans to bankable projects. However, gaps remain in scaling financing flows. Successful cases highlighted the importance of early project preparation, innovative instruments such as payments for ecosystem services, and stronger engagement with national governments and development banks.



three.

GOVERNANCE AND MULTI-LEVEL COLLABORATION ARE ESSENTIAL:

National-local dialogues, peer-to-peer exchanges, and multi-stakeholder platforms created enabling environments for policy coherence. Cities that aligned municipal actions with national strategies—such as in Sierra Leone—were able to embed sustainability objectives into broader governance frameworks.



four.

INCLUSION STRENGTHENS OUTCOMES

Mainstreaming gender considerations and creating participatory processes improved project design and legitimacy. Examples from Costa Rica, Rwanda, and Brazil show that equitable representation in planning and technical roles not only addressed social justice concerns but also enhanced the relevance and uptake of solutions.



five.

PEER LEARNING ACCELERATES INNOVATION:

Exchanges among cities proved powerful in transferring practical solutions, from rain gardens in Teresina inspired by Barranquilla to cable-car planning in Freetown informed by Medellín. The combination of global knowledge platforms and city-to-city learning created pathways for rapid diffusion of ideas.



Together, these lessons highlight that sustainable urban transformation is possible when finance, governance, inclusion, and knowledge are aligned. The UrbanShift experience shows that cities are not only sites of risk, but also engines of solutions—capable of advancing global goals through local action.

GLOSSARY

A	G	O
ADB: Asian Development Bank	GAM: Metropolitan Area of San José (Costa Rica)	OTS: Organization for Tropical Studies
AFA: Adaptation Finance Academy	GAP Fund: Global Climate City Finance Gap Fund	R
AIIB: Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank	GCC: Greater Chennai Corporation (India)	RCZDP: Resilient Coastal Zone Development Planning
B	GEF: Global Environment Facility	REMA: Rwanda Environment Management Authority
BAPPENAS: Indonesian Ministry of National Development Planning	GEF-6: GEF Sixth Replenishment Cycle	RUDP: Rwanda Urban Development Project
BOAD: Banque Ouest Africaine de Développement (West African Development Bank)	GEF-7: GEF Seventh Replenishment Cycle	RUSLP: Resilient Urban Sierra Leone Project
C	GESI: Gender Equity and Sensitivity Inclusion	S
C40: C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group	GHG: Greenhouse Gas	SCIP: Sustainable Cities Impact Program
CAZ: Clean Air Zone	GIZ: German Agency for International Cooperation	SDG: Sustainable Development Goal
CBCA: City-Business Climate Alliance	I	SMC: Surat Municipal Corporation (India)
CBIMA: Corredor Biológico Interurbano María Aguilar (María Aguilar Interurban Biological Corridor)	ICLEI: Local Governments for Sustainability	T
CCUD: China Center for Urban Development	IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change	TAP: Transformative Actions Program
CDP: Carbon Disclosure Project	IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature	TEVU: Transitioning to a Green Urban Economy Project (Costa Rica)
CDRI: Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure	K	TOD: Transit-Oriented Development
CHAMP: Coalition for High-Ambition Multi-level Partnerships	KMGBF: Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework	U
CHANGE: City Hub and Network for Gender Equity	L	UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
CiBiX: City-Business Collaboration Accelerator	LEZ: Low-emission zone	UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme
CO₂: Carbon dioxide	M	UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
COP: Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC	MCTI: Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (Brazil)	UN-Habitat: United Nations Human Settlements Programme
E	MINAE: Ministry of Environment and Energy (Costa Rica)	USAID: United States Agency for International Development
EV: Electric Vehicle	MININFRA: Rwandan Ministry of Infrastructure	UTF: Urban Transport Fund
EWCD: Elderly, Women, Children, and Differently-abled	N	W
F	NbS: Nature-based solutions	WRI: World Resources Institute
FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	NDC: Nationally Determined Contribution	WWF: World Wildlife Fund
FCC: Freetown City Council	NIUA: National Institute of Urban Affairs (India)	Z
	NGO: Non-Governmental Organization	ZEA: Zero Emission Area

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

AUTHORS	Anelise Rosa Amaia Leonet	EDITING & DESIGN
Eillie Anzilotti (WRI) Urvi Patel (WRI) John-Rob Pool (WRI) Mariana Orloff (WRI) Tania Daccarett (UNEP) Wei Huang (UNEP)	ICLEI Maryke van Staden Karishma Asarpota Alyssa Chenault Avantika Arjuna Medhiansyah Putra Ding Xi Matteo Bizzotto	EDITED BY Callan Nefflen ThompsonStenning Creative Group
CONTRIBUTORS	UNDP Karam Amzil Alber Mata Morales Amal Nadim	DESIGNED BY Callan Nefflen ThompsonStenning Creative Group
GEF Claude Gascon Aloke Barnwal Mia Linnea Callenberg	WORLD BANK Xueman Wang Hisham Osman Yuko Arai Esther Mutumba Francis Nkoka	
UNEP Martin Krause Ruth Zugman do Coutto Gulnara Roll Sharon Gil Katarina Barunica Elsa Lefevre Jiya Dhillon Asher Lessels Luiza Schmidt Manoj Kumar Muthumanickam	ADB Arunkumar S. Abraham Nisha Priya	
WRI Rogier van den Berg Pablo Lazo Bruno Incau		
C40 Andrea Fernández Jessy Appavoo Viola Follini Matheus Ortega Barbara Barros Emily White Wanjiku Ngare Zöe Fitzgerald		

ANNEX

PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

Unsplash: Owen Cannon (cover), Getty Images (page 7, page 8, page 21, page 105), Tommao Wang (pages 10-11), Chris Nagahama (page 19), Cesar Badilla Miranda (page 30), Zakaria Zayane (page 37) Annie Spratt (page 34), Xavier Praillet (page 38), Abdulai Sayni (page 42), Random Institute (page 43), Bunting Kargbo (page 45), Prashanth Pinha (page 46), Dibakar Roy (page 70), Andrea Leopardi (page 100), Cesar Badilla Miranda (page 102)

City of Kigali: Page 3, page 39, page 96

Mathilde Nai: Page 14

Thiago Solyno Fotografia: Page 15, page 27, page 63, page 73, page 101

TEVU project: Page 32

Pexels: Gaby Lopez (page 22), Gabriel Ramos (page 23), Manuel Torres Garcia (page 26), Uiliam Nornberg (page 34), Tom Fisk (page 54), Thilina Alagiyawanna (page 70), Yesica Rocio Volpi (page 99), Kelly (page 78, page 103), Al Fariz (page 104)

Reserva de Biosfera Parque Atlántico Mar Chiquito: Page 24, page 25

John-Rob Pool: Page 29

Pixabay: A Different Perspective (page 35), Sixbabywen (page 50)

Rwanda Environment Management Authority: Page 42

Chennai Municipal Corporation: Page 49

Hangzhou Bay Wetland Park: Page 52, page 53

Siura Studio: Page 55

Balikpapan Environment Office: Page 57

Sound Fusion: David-Alex (page 60, page 61), David-Alex-Zack-Peter (page 84), David-Zack (Page 85)

Chengdu Impression Culture Media Co., Ltd: Page 64

Viola Follini: Page 66, page 67

Bappenas: Page 69

C40 Cities: Page 74, page 75

Dennis Waweru: Page 77

Matheus Ortega: Page 78

Epigrama (Juan Navarrete and Nicole Ascanio): Page 81

Ajay Singh: Page 82

Daniel Pereira: Page 87

Vinicius Guimares: Page 89

Roberto Carlos Sanchez: Page 97

FOOTNOTES

1 Freetown, Kenema, Chennai, Teresina, Fes, Marrakech and Ekurhuleni

2 Cartago, Heredia, Freetown, Mendoza, Kigali, Teresina, Chennai, Kenema, Pune and Ningbo

3 Teresina, Florianópolis, San José, Marrakech

4 Accra, Ahmedabad, Barranquilla, Beijing, Belem, Bitung, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Cali, Cape Town, Chengdu, Delhi, Denver, Florianopolis, Freetown, Jakarta, Katowice, Kigali, London, Madrid, Malmo, Marrakech, Montreal, Mumbai, New Delhi, Puducherry, Rotterdam, Salta, San José, Santiago, São Paulo, Sharm El Sheikh, Shenzhen, Ushuaia, Vancouver, Wuhan

5 Buenos Aires, Kigali, Muhanga, Jakarta

6 Progress by country projects to restore, rehabilitate and improve the management of degraded areas has been rapid in China, Costa Rica, Morocco and Sierra Leone, hence the advanced progress reported.

7 Progress on reducing CO₂ emissions is very nascent to date. Emissions reductions scale through regulations, incentives, technological adoption, and individual behavior change, which often entails a lag period between implementation and measurement of actual emissions reductions.

8 Most of the country projects - excluding Costa Rica and Rwanda - show low budget disbursement or implementation status. Budget

disbursement is a measure of how much of the total GEF grant funding the project has drawn down for the implementation of planned project works and on-the-ground interventions. Implementation status is a measure of how mature the project is, considering its official start date relative to its planned completion date. Both measures are useful in explaining the relatively low progress on achieving the core impact indicators - especially on climate change mitigation (CO₂ emissions avoided) and the improvement of people's lives. As projects implement low-carbon solutions and technologies and improve the resilience of the city to climate change, the impacts in terms of emissions reductions and people's livelihoods often take a few years to materialize, through a well-documented lag effect between intervention and result. Nevertheless, progress to date is apparent and encouraging.

9 Country projects began their implementation at different times, and as such not all country projects have conducted a mid-term review yet.

10 While the Global Platform project will conclude in June 2026, all nine country-led projects will continue their implementation through at least 2027, meaning that additional progress against indicators and towards outcomes, and overall impact, is expected over the next few years, even beyond the end of the Global Platform project.

ENDNOTES

i The 10 cities that undertook integrated planning based on SCIP GP capacity building (Cartago, Heredia, Freetown, Mendoza, Kigali, Teresina, Chennai, Kenema, Pune, and Ningbo (China)) (Outcome 1 Indicator 1.1). Source: UrbanShift_PIR_2025_FINAL.docx

ii Four cities (Mar del Plata, Mendoza, Salta, Ushuaia). Source: ARG-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10466-PIR-UNEP-2025-Argentina Sustainable Cities.pdf (Page 18, Outcome 1 (Indicator 1A))

iii Three cities (Belém, Florianópolis, Teresina). Source: Brazil M&E.docx.

iv Three cities (Ningbo, Chengdu, Chongqing). Source: M&E Results Framework and URBANSHIFT ANNUAL REPORT 2025_china.docx

v Twenty municipalities (San José, Escazú, Desamparados, Aserrí, Alajuelita, Mora, Santa Ana, Goicoechea, Tibás, Moravia, Montes de Oca, Curridabat, La Unión, Cartago, Paraíso, Heredia, Santo Domingo, Barva, Belén, Santa Bárbara). Source: CR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_2025-GEF-PIR-PIMS6270-GEFID10467.pdf

vi Four cities (Pune, Surat, Puducherry, and Chennai). Source: India Project Questionnaire.pdf and IND-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10484-PIR-UNEP-2025-India Sustainable Cities.pdf

vii In Indonesia, Balikpapan is drafting its Regional Long-Term (2025-2045) and Medium-Term

(2025-2029) Development Plans, embedding themes such as waste management, climate resilience, circular economy and sustainable transport. Source: INDO-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10494-P173446-2025-ISRPIR-WB-IndonesiaLatest.pdf

viii In Morocco, the Marrakech Communal Action Plan (PAC) 2022–2027 was developed and officially adopted by the City Council in 2023, fully integrating sustainability objectives and incorporating activities from the Marrakech Sustainable City program. A Climate Action Plan is also under development that will further guide low-carbon development and resilience planning. Source: MOR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_2025-GEF-PIR-PIMS6411-GEFID10486.pdf

ix Kigali has updated its Master Plan (2020–2050) to integrate land use, resilience and inclusive mobility, and launched the Green City Kigali Concept Master Plan (2024). Six secondary cities are also preparing detailed area plans, reinforcing evidence-based, integrated urban planning. Source: Updated Result Framework by May 2025_Q3 Progress report (1).docx and Theogene-Rwanda Annual Report Interview_IMPLEMENTING AGENCY_RWANDA (1) (1).docx

x The Brazil project contributed to establishing the federal Green and Resilient Cities Program, developed through coordination between the Ministry of the Environment and

the Ministry of Cities under the CITinova framework. This program promotes urban resilience by funding projects that integrate nature-based solutions (NBS) into city planning. As part of this initiative, the Brazilian government launched a \$25 million call for proposals to finance at least ten projects focused on adapting urban peripheries to climate change through NBS interventions. Source: Brazil M&E.docx

xi USD24,940,000. Total for China UrbanShift (GEF-7 Green and Carbon Neutral Cities Project): USD24.94 million and investments spread across three pilot cities – Chengdu, Chongqing, and Ningbo, plus shared Component 1 enabling systems. Source: M&E Results Framework

xii The TEVU Project facilitated over USD5,828,727.91 in integrated, low-carbon, and resilient land-restoration and conservation investments across the 20 municipalities of the Greater Metropolitan Area (GAM). Source: CR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_2025-GEF-PIR-PIMS6270-GEFID10467

xiii Surat Municipal Corporation reported co-financing of USD2,894,178 toward the Dumas Sea Face NbS pilot, under the categories of development and eco-tourism. Source: IND-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10484-PIR-UNEP-2025-India Sustainable Cities.pdf

xiv The Marrakech Sustainable City project has helped to catalyze increased public and private investments across multiple sectors. For example, investments have grown to USD29.4 million in energy efficiency, USD39.1 million in waste management, USD10.5 million in water resource efficiency, USD84.3 million in sustainable transport, and to USD13.7 million in biodiversity conservation and green space. Source: MOR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_2025-GEF-PIR-PIMS6411-GEFID10486.pdf

xv In Freetown (Sierra Leone), USD14.5 million has been disbursed for neighborhood and market upgrades, rainwater catchment systems and greening—all direct investments in low-carbon and resilient infrastructure. Around USD58 million in total is planned to be allocated toward these projects in the future. Source: SL-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10768-P173676 - P168608-2025-PIR-WB-Sierra Leone.pdf

xvi Five cities in preparatory stage (Buenos Aires, Mar del Plata, Mendoza, Salta, Ushuaia). Source: ARG-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10466-PIR-UNEP-2025-Argentina Sustainable Cities.pdf (Page 23, Outcome 2 (Indicator 2)).

xvii Three cities (Belém, Teresina, and Florianópolis). No city has yet finalized or adopted a full investment plan or project pipeline; however, the groundwork is underway in the three metropolitan regions supported by the

project — Belém, Teresina, and Florianópolis. Each city is advancing preparatory actions toward developing integrated urban and environmental planning frameworks that will evolve into investment plans. These actions include procurement of consultancies for metropolitan planning, formation of local advisory and governance groups, and technical collaborations (e.g., through the Brazil–Sweden “Low Carbon Emission in Cities” exchange). Source: BR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10465-PIR-UNEP-2025-GEF-7 CITinova II.pdf.

xviii China: Ningbo, Chongqing and Chengdu. Source: URBANSHIFT ANNUAL REPORT 2025_china.docx

xix All 20 municipalities of the GAM have operational sustainable investment plans and/or project pipelines for urban restoration and low-carbon development through integration of green infrastructure and biodiversity conservation into city-level plans, etc. Source: CR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_2025-GEF-PIR-PIMS6270-GEFID10467

xx Both have pilot investment plans: UTF Roadmap (Pune) and RCZDP NbS Pilot (Surat) under implementation. Source: IND-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10484-PIR-UNEP-2025-India Sustainable Cities

xxi In Indonesia, Balikpapan’s circular economy pilot initiatives—including methane capture, biomass co-firing, composting and insect

farming—are building pipelines for low-carbon, resilient infrastructure. Source: INDO-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10494-P173446-2025-ISRPIR-WB-IndonesiaLatest.pdf

xxii One city (Marrakech) has established a sustainable investment pipeline (City Climate Plan, Communal Action Plan, and urban biodiversity investments). Source: MOR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_2025-GEF-PIR-PIMS6411-GEFID10486.pdf

xxiii Freetown, Kenema, Makeni, Koidu, and Port Loko. Source: SL-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10768-P173676 - P168608-2025-PIR-WB-Sierra Leone.pdf

xxiv Four cities (Buenos Aires, Kigali, Muhanga, Jakarta) accessed finance opportunities through TAP and Finance Academies. (Indicator 1.2) Source: UrbanShift_PIR_2025_FINAL.docx

xxv Three cities (Belém, Teresina, and Florianópolis). Brazilian local governments, including those in Belém, Florianópolis, and Teresina, participated in the UrbanShift Financial Academy, which helped strengthen their capacity to access financing for sustainable urban development. The report also notes that the Terms of Reference for related consultancies were refined to include a review and adaptation of the national regulatory framework to enable metropolitan projects to secure funding. Additionally, the project mapped existing sustainable

development financing lines and aligned them with priorities identified by the Ministry of Cities and the Ministry of Environment, demonstrating progress toward building financial readiness and access for scaling up urban sustainability initiative. Source: BR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10465-PIR-UNEP-2025-GEF-7 CITinova II.pdf

xxvi Three cities (Heredia, Belén, and Santa Bárbara). Source: CR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_2025-GEF-PIR-PIMS6270-GEFID10467

xxvii Marrakech actively mobilized significant co-financing—USD461 million leveraged, surpassing targets and demonstrating improved financial access. Source: MOR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_2025-GEF-PIR-PIMS6411-GEFID10486.pdf

xxviii At least eight cities engaged through Light-Touch Technical Assistance (LTTA) projects (e.g., Buenos Aires, Chengdu, Alajuelita, Teresina, eThekweni, Freetown, Jakarta, Chennai). Source: UrbanShift_PIR_2025_FINAL.docx

xxix One city (Belém). The project is developing a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) mechanism for the Utinga State Park, intended to support conservation and ecosystem service provision for urban residents in the Belém Metropolitan Region. Source: BR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10465-PIR-UNEP-2025-GEF-7

CITinova II.pdf (Page 26).

xxx Two cities (Ningbo and Chongqing). In China, Ningbo and Chongqing are piloting green finance models and products to support low-carbon and biodiversity initiatives. Ningbo is advancing its biodiversity strategy, natural assets accounting, and piloting zero-carbon urban regeneration, while also initiating studies on green financial models and products alongside its Carbon Neutrality Roadmap. While Chongqing is testing near-zero carbon community regeneration, biodiversity protection in Bishan District, and a dedicated green finance study to channel investments into ecosystem services and carbon neutrality. Together, these pilots are creating replicable models of green finance to support low-carbon and biodiversity initiatives. Source: URBANSHIFT ANNUAL REPORT 2025_china.docx

xxxi Six cities (Heredia, Belén, Desamparados, Alajuela, Santa Paula, San Rafael). Source: CR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_2025-GEF-PIR-PIMS6270-GEFID10467

xxxii In Pune, a dedicated Urban Transport Fund (UTF) is being developed that will enable the city to pool and reinvest revenues from sources such as parking fees, green taxes, and development charges into low-carbon transport infrastructure, thereby institutionalizing long-term finance for sustainable mobility. In Surat, the city has invested USD2.8 million

in nature-based solutions along the Dumas Sea Face to enhance coastal resilience and is now exploring blended finance options for long-term maintenance. Source: IND-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10484-PIR-UNEP-2025-India Sustainable Cities

xxxiii Preparatory studies underway for two strategic studies in Marrakech: Financial diagnostic of the municipality and study on innovative business models and financing mechanisms. Status: Foundational stage; no operational mechanisms yet. Source: MOR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_2025-GEF-PIR-PIMS6411-GEFID10486.pdf

xxxiv Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires joining the Coalition to End Plastic Pollution; 18 African mayors' open letter at Nairobi Forum; Costa Rica's Municipal Stormwater Code update.

Source: UrbanShift_PIR_2025_FINAL.docx

xxxv 1 National Commitment – Creation of the “Green and Resilient Cities Program. The creation of Brazil’s “Green and Resilient Cities Program.” This initiative emerged from the project’s coordination efforts with the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Cities, establishing a federal inter-ministerial framework aimed at improving environmental quality and climate resilience in urban areas. The program represents a concrete policy commitment to integrate urban, environmental, and climate

agendas at the national level and reflects Brazil’s growing emphasis on sustainable urban transformation ahead of COP30 in Belém. Notably, the program launched a USD25 million call for proposals to support at least ten projects focusing on adapting urban peripheries to climate change through Nature-Based Solutions (NBS). While additional commitments are anticipated as the initiative expands, this marks a foundational achievement in mainstreaming urban sustainability priorities into national policymaking and intergovernmental collaboration. Source: BR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10465-PIR-UNEP-2025-GEF-7 CITinova II.pdf (Page 14)

xxxvi The project facilitated 12 multisectoral and inter-institutional agreements, formalized through cooperation frameworks between ministries, municipalities, and private foundations (e.g., CRUSA, UNDP, SINAC, GS1 Costa Rica) to advance green and inclusive urban policies. Source: CR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_2025-GEF-PIR-PIMS6270-GEFID10467

xxxvii Out of 6,843 registrations, there were 989 course completions (≈ 48% female participation). Source: UrbanShift_PIR_2025_FINAL.docx

xxxviii Argentina: 1,550 participants (806 women, 744 men). Source: ARG-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10466-PIR-UNEP-2025-Argentina Sustainable Cities.pdf (Page 8, 2.2 GEF core and sub

indicators (CCA1))

xxxix Two hundred and fifty-seven people (57% female) have participated in training sessions, peer-to-peer exchanges. Source: ARG-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10466-PIR-UNEP-2025-Argentina Sustainable Cities.pdf

xl Fifteen hundred practitioners have participated in biological monitoring, planning workshops and citizen-science programs, including ~51% women (≈765) and ~49% men (≈735), integrating gender equality into urban environmental management. Source: CR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_2025-GEF-PIR-PIMS6270-GEFID10467

xli Transit-oriented development (TOD) workshops in Ahmedabad (Dec 2024) and Pune (May 2025); 153 participants (≈30% women) engaged in applying TOD and Nature-based Solution tools. Source: IND-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10484-PIR-UNEP-2025-India Sustainable Cities

xlii In Freetown, training workshops such as the Tree Tracking Training of Trainers has engaged 750 community members, thereby strengthening local knowledge and capacity to manage and maintain trees and plants that are being planted across the city as part of the country project and the complementary Freetown the Treetown campaign. Source: SL-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10768-P173676 - P168608-2025-PIR-WB-Sierra Leone.pdf

xlili Six cities have received support from UrbanShift in developing their climate action plans (Freetown, Chennai, Teresina, Kenema, Fes, Ekurhuleni). Source: UrbanShift_PIR_2025_FINAL.docx

xliv All 20 municipalities adopted enhanced environmental targets within local development plans, including measurable actions for emission reduction, green space expansion (14,378 ha), and biodiversity conservation under ERUS and IUBC management frameworks. Source: CR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_2025-GEF-PIR-PIMS6270-GEFID10467

xlv Surat and Pune both embedded GHG reduction, Nature-based Solutions integration, and emission-neutrality goals in updated CDPs and plans, supported by Climate and Mobility components. Source: IND-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10484-PIR-UNEP-2025-India Sustainable Cities

xlvi The city of Balikpapan has set a city-wide target of 40% waste reduction and 60% waste management by 2045, with reporting from 2023 suggesting 23% waste reduction and 71% waste management achievements already. Source: INDO-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10494-P173446-2025-ISRPIR-WB-IndonesiaLatest.pdf

xlvi In Kigali, the city has embedded resilience, low-carbon mobility and gender responsiveness into its Master Plan (2020–2050) and Green City Kigali Plan. The

revised National Urbanization Policy (2025) also reflects stronger environmental and inclusivity targets nationally. Source: Theogene-Rwanda Annual Report Interview_IMPLEMENTING AGENCY_RWANDA (1) (1).docx and Updated Result Framework by May 2025_Q3 Progress report (1).docx

xlvi Fifty best practices have been shared between cities through the UrbanShift Global Platform. Source: UrbanShift_PIR_2025_FINAL.docx

xlvi Seven cities (Teresina, Recife, Florianópolis, Belém, Curitiba, São Paulo ABC, Itaquaquecetuba). Teresina and Recife presented NBS projects, including the Filtering Gardens from CITinova I with the associated lessons learned, during the Peer-to-Peer Exchange— Barranquilla, Colombia. Teresina and Florianópolis shared experiences and lessons learned during the Regional Forum UrbanShift—Belém, Brazil. Teresina, Belém and Florianópolis presented water resilience projects during the Peer-to-Peer Exchange — Rotterdam. Curitiba, São Paulo ABC, and the Municipality of Itaquaquecetuba presented relevant experiences during the event during the 2nd National Dialogue. Source: ARG-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_10466-PIR-UNEP-2025-Argentina Sustainable Cities.pdf (Page 28)

l Representatives from Puducherry, Pune, and Surat participated in UrbanShift City Academy (Jakarta),

Finance Academy (Ahmedabad), and Geospatial Lab (Puducherry); active knowledge sharing with the Global Platform. Source: India Project Questionnaire.pdf

li Marrakech adopted higher targets via the City Climate Plan (in development) and the Communal Action Plan 2022–2027, which explicitly positions Marrakech as a “sustainable and resilient city.” Source: MOR-ProjectImplementationReportPIR_2025-GEF-PIR-PIMS6411-GEFID10486



URBAN
SH/FT

SUPPORTED BY:



LED BY:



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



WORLD
RESOURCES
INSTITUTE

