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CDKN ESSENTIALS

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# Building climate resilience in cities

## Key findings

1. Over half of the world's population lives in cities, including many of the world's most vulnerable people.
2. Cities can be frontrunners in mainstreaming climate resilience in sectoral planning processes and infrastructure investments.
3. There are inspiring examples on engagement approaches, and planning and financing tools to increase cities' resilience to the physical and health impacts of climate change.



Intense traffic in the Consolacao avenue, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

**This *CDKN Essentials* summarises learning from Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) work in cities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean in mainstreaming climate compatible development.**

### Why cities?

Over half of the world's population now resides in cities – that is, 54% of the global population or 4 billion people. And the urbanising trend shows no sign of slowing, with the urban population increasing by 57 million people per year.[1]

It is city mayors, as elected leaders of local authorities, who are directly accountable to this growing body of urban residents. Alongside their accountability, local authorities possess local understanding of their city from first-hand experience and are well-positioned to communicate with local stakeholders and mobilise local resources, including people's time and knowledge. These authorities can develop locally appropriate solutions to risks faced by their city.

Cities can also be hotbeds of innovation and are often ahead of the curve: they can set and advance agendas for national governments and other cities alike, and can generate results and impact faster than actions at the national level.

For these reasons, building climate resilience into cities is both vital for city residents themselves, and an opportunity to enhance resilience beyond the city limits.



Cartagena, Colombia: Horsedrawn carriages and hawkers wait for tourists and restaurant goers in the Plaza San Pedro Claver. The Towers of Bocagrande in the background.

However, local accountability is often not accompanied by sufficient decision-making power, capacity or resources to implement, leading to difficulties in moving from diagnosis to action. As a result, many cities have weak formal institutions and face difficulties in delivering adequate basic services, particularly in informal settlements which are home to the most vulnerable urban residents. The scale and pace of urbanisation and unplanned (informal) settlements magnify the challenges facing cities. Secondary and lower-capacity cities, which are often neglected, are growing the fastest.

Since 2012, CDKN and its partners have been working with urban authorities in Asia, Africa and Latin America to build resilience to climate risks for cities and their most vulnerable residents. This has included advancing and communicating knowledge about planning, financing, and delivery mechanisms available to cities and other subnational entities; catalysing innovation and fostering best practice; and bolstering partners' capabilities as effective climate knowledge brokers at the local level. Details of these initiatives and resources can be found on the urban landing page http://cdkn.org/themes/climate-compatible-development-cities-subnational-regions.

**Highlights** include the following.

Inside Stories highlighting how cities in India are responding to extreme heat,[2] based on extensive work in Ahmedabad in 2013-2015, what other cities can learn[3] from their experience, and opportunities for reducing heat risk through long-term urban planning.

An Inside Story[4] and film[5] on **integrating climate change adaptation into city planning in Cartagena de Indias** in Colombia through Plan 4C (Cartagena Competitiva y Compatible con el Clima).

An Inside Story[6] and film[7] on **carbon and water footprinting in Andean cities**, describing this effective tool and mechanism for scaling up greenhouse gas measurement and policy measures to other Latin American cities.

Research and engagement in cities in India, Indonesia and the Philippines that reviews and illustrates the different forms of **local financial sources** that are available to cities to enhance their resilience.[8]

**CDKN can support its partner countries with:**

1. tailored climate science information that allows local actors, including decision-makers, to better understand threats and opportunities
2. capability-building for good governance and planning for inclusive climate compatible development in cities (incorporating social, gender and health aspects)
3. implementation of climate compatible development activities or activities that will support the implementation of the Paris Agreement at local level
4. knowledge management and communications for inclusive climate compatible development in cities, using experiences on the ground
5. mobilising innovative local, national and international resources for implementing climate compatible investments in cities.

## Endnotes

1 UN Habitat (2016) *World cities report*. Nairobi: UN Habitat. (Section 1.2 'Cities: A gathering force'.)

2 Shah, T., Mavalankar, D., Azhar, G.S., Jaiswal, A. and Connolly, M. (2014) 'Addressing heat-related health risks in urban India: Ahmedabad's Heat Action Plan'. CDKN Inside Story. London and Delhi: Climate and Development Knowledge Network (https://cdkn.org/resource/addressing-heat-related-risks-india).

3 Bhatt, M. and Paul, A. (2017). 'India Special Edition'. Climate and Development Outlook. London and Delhi: Climate and Development Knowledge Network (https://cdkn.org/resource/outlook-india-special-edition).

4 CDKN (2016) 'Film: Cartagena – Thriving in the face of climate change'. London and Bogota: Climate and Development Knowledge Network (https://cdkn.org/2016/01/video-cartagena-thriving-in-the-face-of-climate-change).

5 Adams, P., Castro, J., Martinez, C. and Correa, P.C. (2013) 'Embedding climate change resilience in coastal city planning: Early lessons from Cartagena das Indias'. CDKN Inside Story. London and Bogota: Climate and Development Knowledge Network (https://cdkn.org/resource/embedding-climate-change-resilience-in-coastal-city-planning-early-lessons-from-cartagena-de-indias-colombia).

6 Rodríguez Tejerina, M. (2016) 'Assessing carbon and water footprints in Andean cities: Comparative study of La Paz, Quito and Lima'. CDKN Inside Story. London: Climate and Development Knowledge Network (https://cdkn.org/resource/inside-story-assessing-carbon-and-water-footprints-in-andean-cities/?loclang=en_gb).

7 CDKN (2016) *Cities Footprint Project – Urban impact*. Film. London: Climate and Development Knowledge Network.

8 Junghans, L. and Dorsch, L. (2017) *Finding the finance: Financing climate compatible development in cities*. Berlin: Germanwatch (https://germanwatch.org/en/download/13426.pdf).



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