



GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR URBAN CRISES

# **Global Alliance for Urban Crises**

**Strategy 2021-2024**

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## INTRODUCTION

The humanitarian landscape is changing. Urbanization is determining the world's economic activities, population patterns, and environmental footprint. Concurrently, displacement, conflict, natural hazards, environmental disasters, and climate change impacts are increasingly becoming urban phenomena.

Over the past decade, natural hazards and man-made disasters in urban areas has shown gaps in the humanitarian systems' capacity to effectively respond to the scale and complexity of urban emergencies. The impact of these shocks is made worse as they happen in a built environment , which is increasingly unplanned, with inadequate basic and social service provision systems, social tension, shrinking protection space, socio-economic vulnerabilities, environmental degradation, and longer term climate change impacts.

The complexity of crises in urban environments demand *multi-scale, multi-faceted, cross-sectoral, and context-specific* approaches to address vulnerabilities and to promote risk reduction, preparedness, and response beyond traditional humanitarian and development boundaries. Urban crises require us to work differently and to engage a broader spectrum of actors in order to provide immediate relief while strengthening urban resilience to prevent and prepare for slow and sudden onset shocks.

In response to the growing need for more capacity, knowledge, skills, and new partnerships to respond to this new reality, the Global Alliance for Urban Crises (the Alliance) was established in 2016 as a ***multi-disciplinary, collaborative***

***community of practice working to prevent, prepare for, effectively respond to, and rapidly recover from the effects of humanitarian crises and displacement in urban settings.***

The Alliance is an ***inclusive platform bringing together local governments, built environment professionals, academics, and humanitarian and development actors***, working to arrive at systemic change and maximizing their complementary contributions in dealing with urban crises. Almost 100 organizations have joined the Alliance to work towards this vision, and to promote the principles outlined in the Urban Crises Charter (the Charter).<sup>1</sup>

### The Alliance 2016 - 2020

Concluding its first four-year period after its establishment, a key result has been the successful mobilisation of traditional as well as critical non-traditional humanitarian and development actors around a focused agenda of change. This has advanced the role of local governments and built environment professionals in the humanitarian sphere and helped to align efforts for needed systemic changes through broader collaborative work.

<sup>1</sup> <http://urbancrises.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/1.-Urban-Crises-Charter.pdf>

Moreover, has the network fostered partnerships and linkages across constituencies and informed the knowledge and thinking around urban crises response through the sharing of lessons learned. Members have also noted a positive effect in strengthening the urban response agenda within in their organisations when they have been able to leverage the larger community of practice to inform internal policy and programme development.

More concretely, the collaboration across the Alliance constituencies has resulted in:

- **Building Capacity and common tools:** Formulation of guidelines and knowledge products building on lessons learned and best practices. These have helped to identify the potential role of the respective constituencies in urban response, defining and developing tools, and identifying critical gaps in current responses and systems. Amongst others, has the Alliance spearheaded the development of knowledge products on Urban Profiling, Urban Displacement, Building Urban Resilience, a Protocol of Engagement between Local Governments and Humanitarian Actors, as well as an Urban Competency Framework.
- **Piloting Innovative Initiatives:** the new partnerships across the network has fostered innovative initiatives for collaboration at the global as well as local levels, enhancing programmatic collaboration towards urban response.
- **Joint Advocacy:** the knowledge products and lessons learned have formed the basis for coordinating efforts to influence policy agendas and humanitarian programming. The organisation of several learning events and participation in humanitarian fora has allowed the Alliance to promote

joint advocacy to key policy makers and donors.

- **Strengthening Roster Systems:** the Alliance have worked with roster partners to identify ways to enhance roster systems for urban crises response at the local, national, and international scales.

## Key Challenges & Opportunities

Since the inception of the Alliance, the world has continued to witness an increasing number of crises with grave impact on urban areas, as well as a growing complexity of humanitarian crises in urban areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a new form of urban crisis, with its far-reaching impact across the globe, and bringing a whole new layer of vulnerabilities to already crisis stricken urban communities. Reduced access to basic and social services, a shrinking protection space, and rising economic vulnerabilities, is further aggravated by reduced funding in international aid. This has underpinned the need for enhanced localization in the efforts to prevent, prepare for, and respond to urban crises, empowering local actors, and local governments in particular. The continued mobilisation across constituencies will be essential to leverage existing urban, humanitarian, and development expertise, and bolster critical thinking around approaches and tools for urban crises interventions.

While the Alliance has successfully delivered positive outputs during its first four years, there remains an untapped potential to build on these results and further accelerate its engagement to advance the Urban Crises Charter. This is especially pertinent for enhancing impact at the local levels, by adapting and channelling existing knowledge, as well as unlocking the Alliance network in the respective countries, and cities affected by urban emergencies. Furthermore, there is a need to disseminate the developed

knowledge products, both within the network member organisations and externally, and increase evidence-based advocacy towards the humanitarian system, policy makers, and donors.

With limited resources available during the first strategy period, outputs have largely relied on the generous contribution of time and resources from the members towards working tracks under four thematic working groups. A secretariat has supported the coordination of these efforts; however, funding shortfalls has constrained the capacity of the Alliance and in 2020 it discontinued its operational Secretariat. To support increased advocacy, two-way learning between global actors and field levels, and further develop the Alliance as a relevant network, resources are needed to establish a Secretariat responsible for both coordination and normative working tracks. This will be important to ensure results, as well as mitigate overstretched capacities of member's representatives contributing to the Alliance work. Moreover, a broader vertical and horizontal engagement within the member organisations, including with senior management levels, will be critical to ensure that this area of work gets prioritised and that commitments to the work of the Alliance are met with adequate resourcing and high-level buy-in.

There is also a continued need to ensure complementarity with efforts that are led from within the humanitarian system (ex. global clusters, Inter-Agency Standing Committee mechanisms), focusing on the comparative advantages of the Alliance. Members that participate in both spheres are well-placed to maximize the role of both. This provides opportunities to turn advocacy into policy, as exemplified with the Global Alliance for Urban Crisis work on the protocol of engagement between humanitarian actors and local governments which is now turned into IASC guidance.

## Comparative Advantage of the Alliance

Compared to other fora where the urban crises agenda has made progress over the past years (linkages to other networks and platforms are further elaborated below), the Alliance assess its comparative advantages to be:

- **Representing a unique network of local governments, built environment professionals, academia, donors, and humanitarian and development actors** with extensive experiences and competencies in humanitarian and development response, as well as urban programming, the Alliance is uniquely placed to inform, build competencies, and provide new thinking on how the growing challenges posed by urban crises are prepared for and responded to.
- **The multi-constituency build-up** has proven successful in fostering new partnerships and provides an important space for non-traditional humanitarian and development actors who are key to improve learning and policy discourse on urban crises.
- **Representing stakeholders from the local levels, as well as international organisations with both global and local presence**, in addition to research institutions, the Alliance is well placed to facilitate the development, streamlining, and two-way sharing of effective tools, best practices, and case studies.
- **The collaborative working modality**, with members contributing to the delivery of defined targets, ensures flexibility and ability to deliver against outputs without an extensive organisational build-up.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2021-2024

Against the outlined experiences to date, identified challenges and opportunities, the comparative advantage of the Alliance, and taking into account operational remits, the focus of the next strategy period will be to ***leverage the results to date to strengthen the Alliance's contribution to global policy discourse to prepare, prevent and respond to humanitarian crises in a rapidly changing environment, as well as to increase impact at the local levels.***

The focus of the strategy will be to build on the identified needs and added value of the multi-constituency network's continued contribution as a provider of knowledge, guidance, and tools for enhanced preparedness and response to urban crises, tailored to the particularities of such crises and response options. The strategy will address the untapped potential in enhancing impact by adapting and disseminating developed knowledge products and tools as well as unlocking the network at regional and local levels. Moreover, the Alliance will capitalise on collected lessons learned and experiences of its unique network of traditional and non-traditional stakeholders for evidence-based external advocacy to influence policy and programming at the global, regional, and local levels.

The strategy will be focused on a set of deliberate strategic priorities to ensure advancement of the Urban Crises Charter and contribution towards ongoing reform efforts of the humanitarian system, responding to a changing context while seeking systemic changes over time, based on a clear theory of change. The emphasis will be put on identifying gaps where the Alliance can contribute with strategic input and create visible impact by leveraging the perspectives and knowledge of the Alliance's members; in

particular by amplifying the voices of stakeholders normally not part of the humanitarian system.

The strategy will complement reform and change efforts, led from inside the humanitarian international system (ex. Global Clusters, Inter-Agency Standing Committee Results Groups, etc.), that also contribute to the objectives of the Urban Crisis Charter.

**The guiding principle for the coming strategy period will thus be to *link Knowledge with Policy, Advocacy, and Action.***

### Normative Frameworks

The strategy will be anchored in overarching global humanitarian and development frameworks. The strategy will contribute to the delivery of Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG11), as well as the SDGs more broadly. Moreover, the strategic priorities and proposed interventions will contribute to the New Urban Agenda objective of overcoming shocks and strengthen urban resilience. The strategy will in particular align with the following key frameworks:

- **Humanitarian-Development-(Peace) Nexus:** During the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, actors identified strengthening



of the Humanitarian - Development - (Peace) Nexus as a key priority to work towards collective outcomes. Urban crises are particularly characterised by their protracted nature, and in essence the objectives of the Alliance work through *multi-scale, multi-faceted, cross-sector, and context-specific* collaborative approaches to prepare and respond to urban crises are indeed geared towards addressing the interlinked humanitarian and development challenges cities in crises are faced with.

- **Grand Bargain:** Coined at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, the objective of the Grand Bargain was to close the humanitarian financing gap and to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action.<sup>2</sup> The Alliance is contributing towards the Grand Bargain Commitments, amongst others by enhancing transparency (commitment 1) and reduced duplication of work (4), in its efforts to work collaboratively across sectors and constituencies, as well as improving joint and impartial assessments (5) and analysis in urban crises for shared understanding and prioritisation. The Global Alliance is in particular prioritizing the localization agenda of the Grand Bargain, focusing in particular on enhancing the role of local governments. In its efforts to include local governments and stakeholders, including representation from civil society and community involvement in area-based approaches, the Alliance workstreams is also contributing towards participation of those receiving aid in decisions affecting their lives (6).

<sup>2</sup> <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/about-the-grand-bargain>

## Theory of Change

The strategy is based on the following Theory of Change:

**IF** there is a strong global network of multi-constituency stakeholders with experience and technical know-how of urban systems, governance, crises and its impact on local and displaced populations, that can be mobilised to devise and promote a shared understanding of the complexity of urban crises and available approaches and capacities in support of efficient and contextual responses;

**AND** there are up-to-date analytical tools, lessons learned, research and guidance that help to further the understanding and advise for global to local stakeholders in developing and tailoring approaches to respond to urban crises in a transparent, technically sound, and in a participatory and inclusive manner;

**AND** this knowledge is used to directly inform the humanitarian and development systems, policy makers, local governments, civil society, and build environment professionals of the urban dimensions to crises to promote holistic response in urban crises settings;

**AND** there are mechanisms to enhance prevention, preparedness, and response to urban crises at the local levels, building on existing capacities and systems in place, by:

- a) Strengthening the capacities of local and national governments in managing urban crises through sensitisation and access to learning, tools and guidance, in parallel with two-way learning to support enhanced understanding and mechanisms for international organisations to work with local governments and civil society, bolstering the role of local governments to lead the development of multi-sectoral

and multi-stakeholder preparedness, risk-reduction, and response plans;

- b) Connecting regional and local stakeholders from various constituencies and actors to promote a holistic approach to prevent, prepare, and respond to urban crises that considers urban complexities;
- c) Ensuring that locally developed initiatives and policies benefit from global knowledge and vice versa by unlocking partnerships across the Alliance network at the local levels, as well as enhancing global-local-global knowledge transfer;
- d) Recognising the compounding effects of rapid urbanisation, natural and man-made stressors, and chronic capacity gaps;
- e) Ensuring transparency and accountability through active engagement of communities in the design implementation and monitoring of needs assessments as well as projects' activities through deployment of the protocol of engagement between humanitarian actors and local governments, ensuring all relevant urban stakeholders are included in programme design;
- f) Ensuring transparency accountability through the collective sharing of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) to further an evidence-based approach to increase the effectiveness and impact of interventions;

#### THEN

- h) Donors will be able to take more informed funding decisions for the interventions, including local governments in localization efforts, with the most impact against cost

efficiency, fit to an urban context;

- i) Host and displaced communities have their voices heard on their needs, vulnerabilities and capacities to inform prioritised response;
- j) Local governments are, in the short-term, better placed to leverage the potential for local and multi-level partnerships with external aid actors, coordinate and augment humanitarian and development interventions with city policy, strategies and plans, direct specific requests for targeted programs to the relevant external partners;
- k) Local governments, in the longer-term, will be empowered to plan and implement actions, maximizing their contribution and facilitating the transition to recovery, and;
- l) Communities are capacitated to better prepare, respond, and recover from urban crises.

**ULTIMATELY** the Global Alliance for Urban Crises will support local, national, and global stakeholders prepare, respond, and recover from the effects of humanitarian crises and shocks in urban areas.

## STRATEGIC GOALS 2021-2024

With the aim to leverage results to date to strengthen the Alliance contribution to global policy discourse to prepare, prevent, and respond more effectively to humanitarian crises in a rapidly changing environment, as well as to increase impact at the local levels, the Alliance will address three interlinked core priorities, providing the strategic framework of action for 2021-2024:

- I. **Strategic Goal 1: Local governments are empowered to prepare, prevent, and respond to humanitarian crises.**
- II. **Strategic Goal 2: Holistic responses to urban crises is promoted through enhanced accessibility of updated and relevant knowledge, tools, and lessons learned.**
- III. **Strategic Goal 3: Advance the Urban Crises Charter for systemic change through evidence-based external advocacy.**

The following sections describe the challenges to be addressed, proposed strategy of engagement, and expected outcomes for each of these strategic priorities. A final section outlines the principles of engagement and systemic mechanisms through which the Alliance Strategy will be coordinated, implemented, and monitored.

### **Strategic Goal 1: Local governments are empowered to prepare, prevent, and respond to humanitarian crises.**

*Summary: In order to support local governments, service providers, and civil society actors operating at regional and local levels, the*

*Alliance will leverage existing knowledge and its network through capacity building, knowledge exchange, piloting of new initiatives, and support of urban advisory capacities to facilitate the adaptation and implementation of developed approaches and tools employed in the lifecycle of urban crises, while enhancing the role of local communities.*

### **Key Challenges to be addressed**

- a) Coordinated multi-sector, multi-stakeholder, and/or area-based programming fit to an urban context still largely happens by chance, not by design. While the Alliance at the global level brings together a significant network of partners across constituencies, experiences suggest that currently, in-country cross-operational partnerships for urban programming occur sporadic. Furthermore, urban crises programming is only recently emerging as a lens for tailoring Humanitarian Response Plans and UN Strategic Frameworks. More efforts are needed to help draw lessons from and support such efforts, including how such plans can foster partnerships with non-traditional humanitarian and development partners.
- b) Local governments and actors operating at the local levels have noted a need for more practical support and capacity building on how to adapt global knowledge products and tools to the local context. While recognising the results in knowledge and tools development in the foregoing strategy period, a major gap persists in bringing these results and meaningfully engaging at the local levels.



A key opportunity is identification of entry points and options for mobilising the local branches of the member organisations offering an unexploited potential for results. Such avenues when identified, could also help link local governments and civil society with technical experts, from e.g. built environment, and with the humanitarian and development architecture. Experience with the COVID-19 response has shown examples of local level actors stepping up to take on the coordination and implementation of projects as international actors have been prevented from being present locally, which can help to model options for advancing localisation.

- c) The lack of established mechanisms for the Alliance to deepen its linkages and “mobility” for more direct and measurable impact at the local level is a hindrance for the Alliance to deliver on the Urban Crises Charter. Reflecting that the Alliance is not an operational entity and will not implement on-the-ground-activities as such, identification of entry points that leverage and pool existing knowledge, enable the transfer of innovative approaches, and strengthen the multi-constituency network at the local levels is necessary.

### Strategy of engagement

Outcome 1.1: Local governments and actors are capacitated to better prepare, respond, and recover from urban crises through localisation of the Urban Crises Response Agenda.

1. The Alliance will work with local interlocutors to develop capacity, as well as facilitate peer-to-peer exchange for national and local governments

responding to urban crises. Support local governments to prepare for and continue operation throughout the life cycle of long-lasting crises.

2. Facilitate trainings at local levels on the Alliance’s knowledge products and approaches (e.g. profiling and area-based approach), and the protocol of engagement between humanitarian actors and local governments. Initiate, through online learning and exchange, trainings targeting field staff, senior programme staff, and local governments to support response efforts. Translate and make accessible developed knowledge products and tools – including translating products to several languages.
3. In line with the recommendations of the developed Competency Framework, explore opportunities for strengthening urban advisory stand-by capacity that could be deployed in support of local/national governments and/or the response coordination system, including at the UNCT/HCT levels. This will entail mapping of where urban advisory would be most in demand (local, national, regional), what kind of expertise and seniority this would require, and if and how the Alliance could support in linking stand-by rosters to on-the-ground demands. Some efforts in this regard has already been undertaken by partners of the Global Shelter Cluster, CANADEM, and NORCAP, bolstering further capacities would thus need to expand and/or seek complementarities with these efforts. The focus of a contribution of the Alliance would be to enhance the capacities for *cross-sector urban advisory*, rather than sector specific advisory.

Outcome 1.2: The Alliance network is activated, and new partnerships established at the local levels, to promote cross-sector, multi-constituency, and multi-stakeholder collaboration to address urban crises impact.

4. Pilot flagship programming in cities through joint programming with local governments and Alliance members. Efforts to mobilise around urban crises approaches have gained greater success where there were already stakeholders and funding present (such as in MENA), compared to where there are sudden onset crises, with unclear stakeholders and unpredictable funding. Piloting could draw on existing resources where partners are already present yet aim to identify how such initiatives can help to proactively understand risks, as well as be rapidly deployed in cities affected by sudden shocks. Ongoing efforts to develop Urban Recovery Frameworks in the MENA region spearheaded by UN-Habitat are initiatives in this regard and will provide learning on potential modelling of such programmes for replication.
5. Establish mechanisms to mobilise the network at the local level. The Alliance will serve as a convener (identifying and populating) to enable synergies between the constituencies in crisis contexts. Potential sub-committees of the Alliance at regional or national level in some pilot countries could be considered. This could be done by mobilising regional or country representatives of key agencies part of the Alliance. Facilitate regional cross-constituency meetings and sharing of evidence-based lessons in regions with ongoing urban crises.
6. In line with the Goals of the Grand

Bargain, identify options for channelling funding to local governments in crises situations and how to facilitate better linkages between the local governments, donors, and external partners. This will entail mapping of the challenges and opportunities of giving local governments access to funding.

7. Create spaces where the linkages and exchange between local communities, civil society, and informal actors and global level actors can take place, highlight their role, learning from their knowledge, strengthen collaboration across these and other constituencies, and support/complement them adequately.

## Strategic Goal 2: Holistic responses to urban crises are promoted through enhanced accessibility of updated and relevant knowledge, tools, and lessons learned

**Summary:** *To complement existing efforts to collect and disseminate knowledge and understanding on urban crises, a Urban Crises Hub<sup>3</sup> will be established to serve as a physical and online provider of curated information, including developed tools, approaches, best practices, and lessons learned to support actors at global, regional, national, and local levels engaged in urban crises response.*

### Key Challenges to be addressed

- d) Despite significant results of the Alliance in producing knowledge products, research, lessons learned, and case studies from context specific urban crises response situations, a gap remains in actively

<sup>3</sup>The "Urban Crises Hub" is a working title – name to be set at a later stage.

mapping out knowledge gaps from the perspectives of different constituencies, and for use at different levels. Important knowledge products have been developed around certain thematic areas, however, recent examples of urban crises have shown continued needs in further knowledge development.

- e) The COVID-19 pandemic – exacerbated by high-density urban areas - has especially highlighted an urgent need for research and knowledge on the impact of the outbreak on urban areas in general, and on urban communities already exposed to humanitarian crises, in particular. Moreover, some cities in developing and crises affected countries have shown positive experiences in the management of the outbreak where important lessons learned should be captured, as well as potential peer-to-peer learning be explored for application in humanitarian crisis situations.
- f) The knowledge products developed in the first strategy period has been some of the key outputs of the Alliance work to date. Yet, creating general global guidance which at the same time is responsive to the needed guidance at the local levels is challenging. Thus, to make these outputs relevant and useful on the ground, there is a need to make this knowledge, guidance, and lessons learned accessible and translated to various users and contexts.
- g) Efforts have been made over the past years to make a repository for available reports and research on urban response. ALNAP, in particular, has built up a solid repository with knowledge on Urban Humanitarian Crises, providing an easy-to-navigate site to access available research and reports.

However, there is still a gap in providing curated, translated and easily accessible information for a broad audience at global, regional, national, and local levels beyond the humanitarian agencies audience.

### Strategy of engagement

Outcome 2.1: Updated and innovative tools and knowledge products on urban crises response is made accessible through the establishment of an Urban Crises Hub.

- 8. Establish an Urban Crises Hub with a physical presence in Geneva in support of and closely linked to the Geneva Cities Hub. The Urban Crisis Hub will host the secretariat functions of the Alliance.
- 9. Develop an online platform of the hub (as an extension of the Alliance website) that will make knowledge products, tools, relevant news, and information about the Alliance work readily available in a curated form. The platform will build on and link to existing repositories. Mindful that many (e.g. first responders or local government representatives) will not have the time to read through lengthy reports, in addition to language barriers, the platform will be designed to provide already digested and curated information with further linkages to more lengthy reports and guidance notes. For instance, key concepts, terminologies, and case studies will be presented directly on the website with navigation to additional reports and research on the respective subjects. The platform will have a clear focus on learning through strong visualisations, tailored messaging, and presentation of case studies for a broad audience. E-learning modules will be developed (in several languages) to increase the accessibility

and translation of approaches and tools to diverse contexts and users.

10. Explore opportunities to link to existing mapping and databases with risk information and open source data about cities.

**Outcome 2.2: The multi-constituency network of the Alliance with their geographical outreach, promotes relevant and cutting-edge knowledge informing the urban response agenda.**

11. Conduct a mapping of knowledge gaps to identify potential additional research, learning and guidance needs with special attention to usefulness for those doing (field) programming and for local interlocutors seeking guidance, to develop a dissemination and knowledge management strategy. The mapping should seek to identify knowledge that can be put into practice immediately. It will further identify what the Alliance can do to equip those responding to urban crises with the right tools and what would be needed to enable the use of the tools in the initial phases of a response. Further, options for two-way communication and feedback loops on learning will be developed, with emphasis of bringing learning from the local levels to the fore.
12. Develop critical learning on both best practice and on urban response failures and/or response that has not met needs adequately and at scale, encouraging a strategic engagement of the Alliance partners from the academic constituency. Results and gaps attribution will focus both on areas the Alliance and members could influence, and areas where other actors are best fit to influence. As such, guidance and lessons learned

from a wide array of experiences of collaboration between local governments, humanitarian and development actors, as well as non-traditional partners will help to inform both global level discourse, as well horizontal sharing between urban response situations.

13. Facilitate town hall style open discussions with diverse stakeholders and across the constituencies (learning from the Live Learning during COVID-19) to capture lessons learned around specific urban responses or more general issues.

### **Strategic Goal 3: Advance the Urban Crises Charter for systemic change through evidence-based external advocacy**

**Summary:** *To further strengthen the global urban crises response agenda, the Alliance will identify and target strategic areas where the urban agenda is not yet high priority, with a built-in flexibility to engage on emerging issues as they arise through evidence-based advocacy, in order to influence and inform normative discussions and policy.*

#### **Key Challenges to be addressed**

- h) The Alliance has successfully advanced the urban crises agenda in humanitarian and urban discourse over the past years, however there is a need to engage in policy discourse in a more consistent and frequent manner and targeted advocacy efforts to advance the priorities outlined in the Urban Crises Charter.
- i) The Alliance will continue to bolster its voice, and in particular of those constituencies not represented in the



international humanitarian system, on topics where the network already has foothold. Currently, urban response is still under-funded and holistic response under-estimated, and urban recovery is under-timed – this requires continued and increased attention in policy discussions. A strategic review of the humanitarian and development landscape will help identify where the urban agenda is not yet high priority and thus where the Alliance and its network has an opportunity to inform and influence response to gain the greatest impact. The Alliance should strengthen its role as an affiliated platform to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and pursue policy shifts through its IASC members.

- j) While the work in the forgoing strategy period was focused on certain thematic areas (displacement, resilience), this has hindered a flexibility to address emerging gaps and engage in current response discourse (e.g., but not limited to the role of local governments, profiling, coordination, urban recovery frameworks, data and impact-based evidence etc.).
- k) Lack of internal capacity of the Alliance to be active in external advocacy and policy discourse, critical for the visibility of the Alliance and potential access to donors.

### Strategy of engagement

Outcome 3.1: The Alliance is prepared to deliver relevant and poignant advocacy on prevention, preparedness, and response to urban crises.

- 14. Develop an evidence-based advocacy plan based on lessons learned, and experiences and capacities of the members on respective areas. The advocacy plan will be guided by the Urban Crises Charter,

as well as the outlined Theory of Change, and stipulate possible advocacy efforts at both global and regional/local levels.

- 15. Engage the Alliance members in joint work around developing ready-made policy recommendations by increasing and facilitating normative discourse on prevention, preparedness, and response to urban crises. Policy discussions can also be convened within the respective constituencies and amongst the cross-constituency network around specific policy areas to develop advocacy. Areas of interest could be, but is not limited to for instance climate change, health and pandemics, Housing, Land and Property (HLP), displacement, stages of crises, role of local governments, urban profiling, urban crisis coordination, urban recovery frameworks etc. The aim will be to increase normative discussions and ready-made policy recommendations.
- 16. Participate and deliver advocacy at key events and platforms relevant to urban response, such as the World Humanitarian Forum, pledging conferences, World Urban Forum, UNFCCC COPs etc., as well as partake and contribute towards discussions within the IASC, the cluster system and other coordination levels.



## OPERATIONALISATION OF THE STRATEGY

The ambition of the strategy considers the current operational environment of the Alliance, including available funding. Delivery of the strategy first and foremost hinges on the sustained and regular engagement of the constituencies and members around the outlined priority areas. Ensuring this will require further strengthening and broadening of the network, including mobilisation of new members, as well as sound coordination and management of activities.

Furthermore, the successful implementation of the strategy will rely on the mobilisation of funds, enhanced communication, and interaction across the constituencies, as well as increased visibility of results. The outlined strategy will have to be scaled down or up based on available resources – including partner commitments to delivery of activities. Priority actions to fulfil operational prerequisites for achievement of results are described below.

### Strengthening of the Alliance network

- a) Reconfirm and re-energise engagement across the network through activities and cross-constituency and member dialogue. Ensuring frequent and strong communication with the whole membership-base and cross-constituencies beyond the most active members will be an important step to this end.
- b) Bolster the engagement of important non-traditional stakeholders in the urban response discourse, such as local governments, built environment professionals and academics by promoting internal dialogue, policy shifts, and action.
- c) Mobilise new constituencies such as civil society (incl. grassroot organizations, faith institutions), private sector (incl. chambers of commerce), service providers, private and philanthropic foundations; as well as actors from relevant thematic fields such as urban health, protection, and service delivery. Moreover, mobilising more donor agencies will be critical to drive systemic change towards the urban response agenda.
- d) Promote policy and knowledge retainment amongst member organisations by vertical and horizontal mobilisation. While the internalisation within member organisations does not fall within the Alliance mandate, the Alliance will gain higher impact of its work if the urban response agenda is internalised and there is broader engagement throughout the member organisations from HQ management to field staff. Support for the internalisation of the urban crisis agenda could be strengthened by distribution of ready-for-use advocacy points and tailored messaging, and more frequent and relevant newsletters on normative issues and lessons learned for further distribution and internal advocacy.
- e) Diversify engagement from the local governments' constituency. The main global local government networks continue to represent the constituency. Support is needed to facilitate outreach to their broad membership while also ensuring outreach to local governments

affected by crises or at high risk outside of these networks.

- f) Ensure accountability and transparency across the whole network, as well as inclusion in the engagement process of activities. A protocol for engaging the network has been proposed, to ensure a broader engagement of the whole network beyond knowledge dissemination, building an interactive interphase to call for expertise and show responses in real time.
- g) A full stakeholder mapping of existing platforms and initiatives with intersecting mandates in priority contexts should be a further step to identify complementarity and alignment. Some key stakeholders and platforms that the Alliance will engage with, such as IASC and the cluster system, is outlined in the operational plan annexed to the strategy.

## Funding

- h) Secure a minimum level of (sustained) funding to cover the establishment of a secretariat with dedicated staff and resources to retain a minimum level of activities and coordination of members. The fundraising strategy (in Annex) will provide recommendations for priority interventions based on limited, some, and more funding. However, the experience over the foregoing years has shown that it is critical to mobilise some minimum funding to ensure coordination and facilitation of targeted activities to drive systemic change. Resources need to be available to facilitate activities, draw in additional resources, and communication with the membership-base.

## Visibility and Communication

- i) Strengthen visibility and communication to further anchor the Alliance and show results and how products are used, as well as attract new members. A communication strategy needs to be drafted to ensure work in this area systematically.
- j) Establish mechanisms for more two-way communication between & amongst members for continuum of the knowledge sharing.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The following section describes the means, frequency, tools, and responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Alliance strategy:

- a) The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the Alliance strategy will be based on yearly work plans and results framework, including commitments from partners in form of indicators, their means of verification, baselines, and targets. The M&E process will facilitate strategic and programmatic adjustments and identification of challenges to inform planning.
  - b) The Steering Committee (SC), with the support of the Secretariat, will be responsible for coordinating with members for reporting on the indicators on an annual basis. The following M&E products will be developed and approved by the SC:
    - A yearly work plan with clear activities and targets supporting the delivery of Strategic Goals and Outputs. The work plan will have special emphasis in identifying sound indicators to measure results related to advocacy, knowledge development and exchange and so forth. Sound measure of results against these activities will be critical to help in fundraising efforts and demonstrating the impact of the Alliance.
    - An annual Results Report will be produced summarizing the progress made by the Alliance against output indicators defined in the yearly plans and will highlight key achievements and major bottlenecks (to be developed by the Secretariat). A final report will be developed to take stock of the Alliance achievements and progress throughout the four-year strategy period and to generate evidence of the Alliance contribution towards its overall ambition and Urban Crises Charter.
- A mid-term evaluation will be undertaken mid-2022 aiming to provide feedback on progress and enhance the strategy effectiveness and contribution to overall priorities. The mid-term evaluation will assess progress, identify challenges and make necessary adjustments to the strategy and/or results framework.
  - A final evaluation following the 2021-2024 Strategy conclusion, and its coherence and effectiveness in contributing towards systemic change, as well to provide informed recommendations for the next planning framework.