UN-HABITAT

SDG
Cities
Global Initiative

Annual Progress Report

2023

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Empowering Urban Futures

In 2020, amid global calls for accelerated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) action, UN-Habitat, under the leadership of Executive Director Maimunah Moh'd Sharif, initiated its 2020-25 Strategic Plan. This led to the birth of SDG Cities, an ambitious initiative aimed at impacting 1 billion lives in 1000 cities, reducing climate emissions, and pollution. It was envisaged that working at that level of scale would create a ripple effect that would make achieving the SDGs in cities a norm - something cities just do - worldwide.

To realize this vision, a transformative approach was imperative. UN-Habitat adopted a systematic methodology, embracing digitization and partnerships as core strategies. Also central to this approach was the promotion of All-of-Society action, particularly given the advantageous position of mayors and local authorities, to work with communities, civil society, and the private sector in co-creating and driving local transformation.

In 2020, the four-track SDG Cities approach was established, emphasizing data analysis, inclusive planning, institutional building, local institutions and effective enabling environments, and financing local SDG impact initiatives. With support from the Global CEO Alliance and Capcade, in collaboration with UN-Habitat, digital tools and a platform were created for these tracks, ensuring worldwide accessibility.

From 2021 to 2022, SDG Cities piloted in 8 cities globally, recognizing outstanding efforts through SDG Cities Recognition. With a proven concept, 2023 transitioned to scaling the initiative, introducing SDG Cities Hubs where multiple cities collaborate on four tracks. Hubs are established in Ghana, Andes, and Türkiye with UN-Habitat support. Costa Rica and Lusophone hubs are in development, and others are planned for the African and Asia Pacific subregions.

In 2023, partnerships bolstered all-of-society engagement for SDG Cities. The Women-Led Cities Initiative, with support from the UN Capital Development Fund and EllaImpacta, empowers women's local leadership for gender equality and social inclusion. The Sport and SDG Cities Initiative, with the International Olympic Committee, advocates for sport's role in health and peace. Youth and faith-based initiatives are in progress, along with ongoing efforts to engage local authorities and the business community.

With 49 cities onboard and over 100 preparing to join, our current focus is on scaling up by establishing hubs and engaging with city networks. As I transition to new roles within UN-Habitat, I want to thank the Programme Development Branch for enabling this journey, the dedicated SDG Cities team, our partners, and the inspiring mayors and municipal staff of partner cities. I'm thrilled that SDG Cities coordination will be in the capable hands of Shipra Narang Suri and Martino Miraglia, along with an expanded team, as they propel this initiative forward.

Dyfed Aubrey
Inter-Regional Advisor,
SDG Cities Global Initiative Lead,
UN-Habitat

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Global Initiative

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES
AND COMMUNITIES

Overview

A decade ago, the world shifted irreversibly from being mostly rural to mostly urban. Today 55% of the global population lives in urban areas and this may increase to 68% by 2050 as a further 2.3 billion people are added to the urban population. Cities now generate 80% of the world's economy, and most countries that have urbanised have experienced economic growth. Urbanisation is thus often seen as a ticket out of poverty.

SDG Cities Global Initiative is a collaborative effort that aims to reach 1000 cities and 1 billion lives. It provides a structured way to support cities to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs, improving quality of life and driving positive social, economic, and environmental Impact.

It systemazies a sequence of data collection, analysis, strategic planning and the development, financing and implementation of projects that have a measurable impact on the SDGs.

It enhances key local capacities needed to drive sustainable urban development- governance, planning, financing and service delivery. It incentivizes political will through a prestigious SDG Cities Recognitions that shows the efforts made by cities to drive SDG achievement.

SDG Cities **Hubs** are national, subnational and sub-regional groups of cities supported by a technical hub, staffed by national experts trained by UN-Habitat. National Hubs Ghana and Turkey with support from the Global Hub in Canada have started with 10 cities but will expand over time to cover 50-100 cities, thus facilitating sustainable urban development on a large scale. The scale will also be reached through SDG Cities **Windows** that collaborate with key partners, UN agencies, local governments, and communities. Windows established in 2023 include Women-led Cities and Sports & and SDG Cities.

SDG Cities Process

0 **Onboarding**
Commitment to create SDG Impact

1 **Data**
To inform decision making

2 **Strategic Plan**
SDG aligned sustainable urban development plan

3 **Institutional Effectiveness**
Strong capacity to ensure seamless service provision

4 **Investment and Implementation**
SDG key projects financed and implemented

SDG Cities
Global Initiative
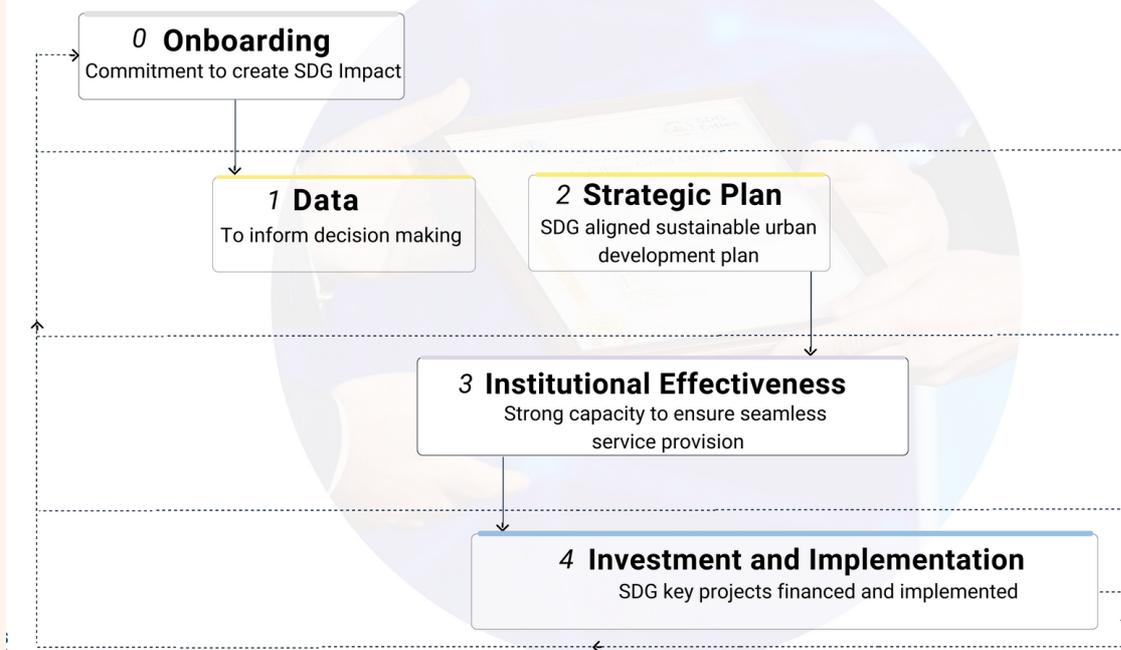
Impact in Numbers

Up to 2023

Integrated Digital Platform

1

8

Framework, Assessment & Capacity building instruments

Events

15

49

Cities onboarded

The **SDG Cities Global Initiative** has exhibited a promising trajectory, acquiring valuable insights and fostering engagement from diverse stakeholders such as **local government** and **civil society**. Their collective efforts contribute significantly to the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the urban level. The data collected, both quantitative and qualitative, plays a pivotal role in assessing the initiative's effectiveness and refining strategies for broader implementation.

**1000 cities
1 billion lives**

*Leave No One Behind,
Engage All of Society*

Dhaka South, Silver Recognition

The Mayor of Olmedo Lourdes Guerrero receiving Silver Recognition

"As one of the municipalities with the lowest per capita income in the country, Olmedo highlights the critical importance of ongoing support for smaller municipalities in their development journey."

Lourdes Guerrero
Mayor, Olmedo, Eucador

The mayor of Chillanes Mirian Galarza receiving Silver recognition

"Our city is particularly vulnerable to natural disasters, exacerbated by climate change. This is a challenge that we must address urgently."

Mirian Galarza
Mayor, Chillanes, Ecuador

Brisbane SDG Cities Asia Pacific Urban Summit

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SDG Cities Map

Paving the way to a sustainable urban future, cities are becoming vibrant hubs of innovation, where green initiatives and smart solutions harmonize with the pulse of progress.

NORTH
AMERICA

EUROPE

ARAB STATES

LATIN
AMERICA

AFRICA

ASIA PACIFIC

Number of Recognitions Per Region (2023)
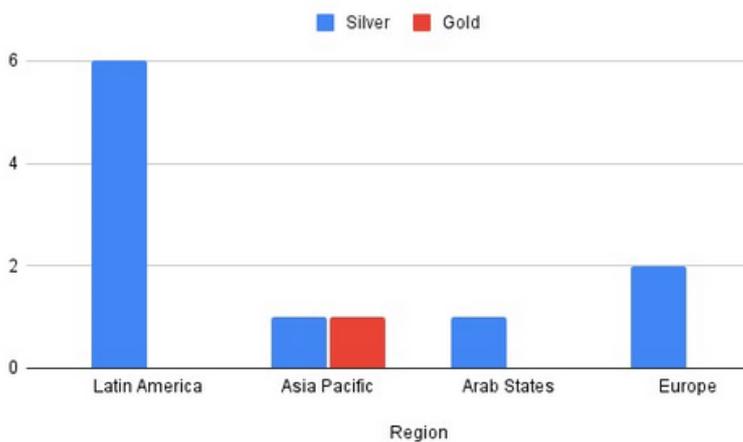
Number of Onboarded Cities Per Region (Total)

Africa(12)

Europe (4)

Arab States(4)

Asia Pacific (5)

Latin America (10)

North America (14)

SDG Cities 2023 Highlights

Ghana

The **Ghana Smart SDG Cities Programme** is taking off! The Ghana Smart SDG Cities Initiative, building on Norway's previous support to Ghana's Ministry of Finance, aims to propel Sustainable Development Goals in Ghana. This initiative empowers Ghanaian cities by employing a systematic value chain of data collection and analysis, participatory visioning, strategic planning, and smart cities planning, to identify sustainable development priorities, leading to investment plans encompassing various SDG impact projects.

The Ghana Smart SDG Cities Initiative will work in 10 cities, benefiting over 5 million people. Recently, the Ghana delegation showcased their work at the UN-Habitat Assembly in Nairobi and spoke at the SDG Summit in New York. The new Ghana team is actively engaged in data gathering and analysis, gearing up for the official launch of the SDG Cities Programme.

Mafra

Click on the link to watch the **Mafra SDG song on youtube**

In 2022, Mafra became the first European city to achieve SDG Cities Silver Recognition. In 2023, it collaborated with other Lusophone Cities, and presented its first Voluntary Local Review at the High-Level Political Forum in July. In September, Mafra hosted the SDG **Municipalities Lusophone Seminar**, extending an invitation to the SDG CitiesGlobal Initiative team to participate. After the seminar, the cities of Almada, Braga, Loulé, Mafra, Matosinhos, and Fundão were welcomed into the

SDG Cities Global Initiative along with Barcarena, Brazil, Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, Mogi das Cruzes, Brazil and Quelimane, Mozambique. Mafra and Braga are actively working on their inclusive, evidence-based strategic plans and are about to be awarded with SDG Cities Gold Recognition

An Integrated Digital Platform


GCEOA - Digital Platform Launch

The UN-Habitat, SDG Cities Global Initiative, in partnership with the Global CEO Alliance, established a streamlined four-track process to expedite SDG implementation in cities. Central to this effort is the creation of a cutting-edge digital diagnostic tools platform, empowering cities to self-assess capacities. These digital diagnostic tools are specifically designed to aid cities in our third track, **building institutional capacity** in governance, urban planning, revenue generation, and urban services like mobility, waste management, and water/sanitation. The online platform helps cities identify strengths and weaknesses more efficiently, enhances efficiency, boosts city productivity, lowers costs, promotes data management, and fosters consistent collaboration in line with UN normative values.

Capcade - Digital Collaboration

UN-Habitat and **Capcade Impact Foundation** have partnered to propel the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Capcade Impact Foundation, specializing in digital workspaces and fostering collaborative city growth, seamlessly integrates these ecosystems with the SDG Cities Global Initiative. The ongoing development of the Capcade platform is for cities to engage in the end-to-end process of SDG Cities. They are guided through the various recognition levels, accessing tools and digital support on data, building their acton-oriented VLR, assessing capacities of local institutions through the digital diagnostic tools platform in collaboration with GCEOA, directing them towards training resources, and building high-impact projects derived from the action-oriented VLR, structuring them for financing and match-making with finance resources.

# Framework, Assessment and Capacity building Instruments
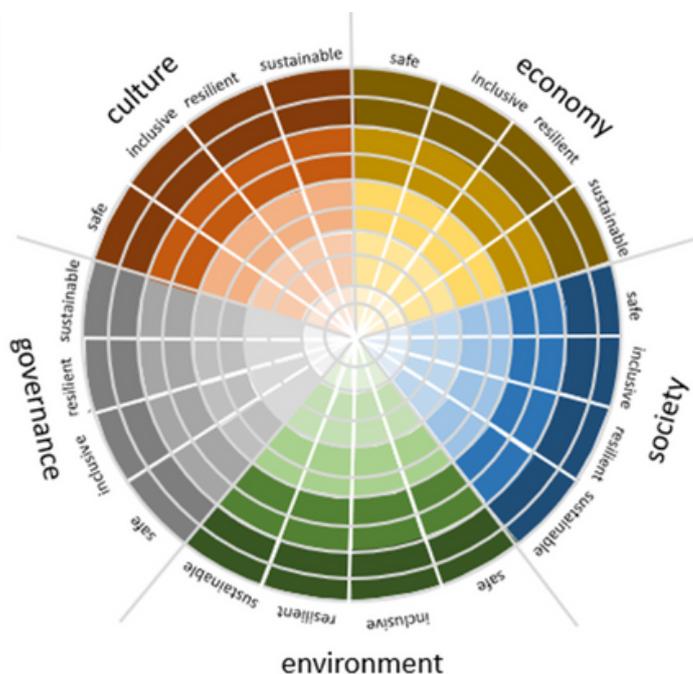
Local Finance Framework

In 2023, the SDG Cities team collaborated with the Planning, Finance, and Economy Section, identifying the need for a Local Finance Framework. Sessions in Malaga, Shanghai, Istanbul, and Frankfurt explored external finance and innovative solutions for local governments. The focus was on city types and projects offering value for money. Discussions addressed Public-Private Partnerships' success, factors hindering financial closures, blended finance effectiveness, and choosing between PPPs and government debt. A draft of the Local Finance Framework is ready for further refinement after review. The 2024 goal is to mobilize resources, pilot the framework in diverse locations, and positively impact local government finances

Urban Monitoring Framework

In 2023, with technical support from the SDG Cities Team, **10 cities** achieved the SDG Cities Silver Recognition Level. An important factor in achieving Silver Recognition is the completion of stocktaking and provision of Urban Monitoring Framework **(UMF)** data. The UMF was developed by UN-Habitat with the UN System and key partners' collaboration and enable city authorities, as well as local and national stakeholders, to monitor the progress of their cities towards sustainable urban development. The UMF draws from relevant international urban policy frameworks and provides 77 indicators, which align key city objectives of safe and peaceful, inclusive, resilient sustainable and functional domains of society, economy, environment, culture governance & and implementation. Currently, 29 cities are taking stock of their SDG progress and compiling their UMF data as they prepare to onboarding into the SDG Cities Global Initiative.
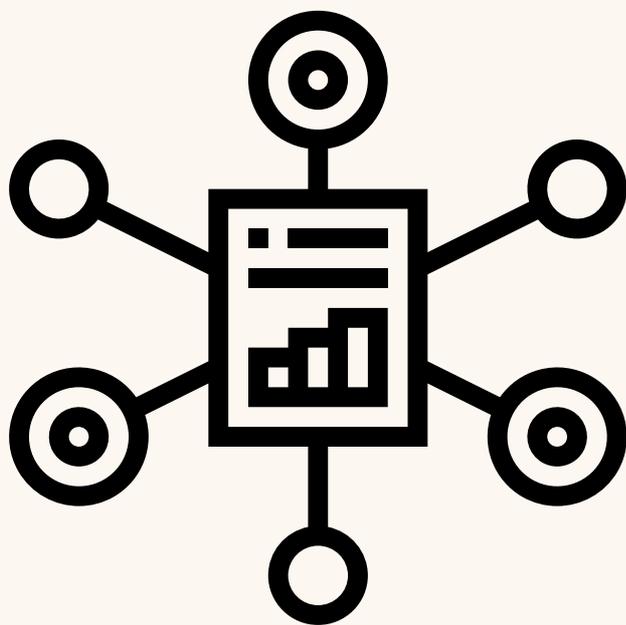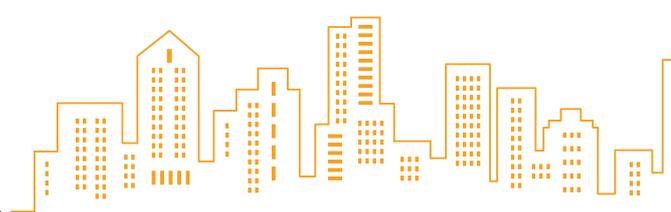
SDG Cities Hubs

> The past year saw SDG Cities National Hubs expanding with initiatives in Ghana and Türkiye taking off!

Turkey SDG Cities Hub

In Türkiye, an exciting new SDG Cities Hub was launched on November 2, 2023, under Mayor Yucel Yilmaz's leadership. The **Balikesir SDG Cities Hub** is a joint project that engages Turkish cities into the SDG Cities initiative. The hub will bring together municipalities, businesses, civil society, and stakeholders to collectively drive sustainable development. Balikesir is the Turkish host to the Inter-Regional Summit of Andean and Turkish Mayors in 2022 and 2023, with Bogota, Colombia being the next host in 2024. The SDG Cities Hub is partnered with UNEP's Balikesir Environmental Centre, which provides local data across Turkiey and Turkic States on environment and resilience.

Andean SDG Cities Hub

The UN-Habitat Andean Countries office has been in Colombia since 2003 promoting sustainable urban development. In 2023 office expanded its role to become the SDG Cities Hub for the Andean Region. Through the Andean hub 10 cities in Colombia Ecuador and Bolivia have been onboarded, with many more in process. National Urban Forums have been held in Ecuador (2) and Colombia (3) which have focused on SDG Cities. The Andean Hub also cohosted two inter-regional summits in Türkiye on World Habitat Day (2022) and World Cities Day (2023). The Andean Hub is focused on building capacity in the region in regards to the SDGs and localization.

Ghana Smart SDG Cities Hub

The Ghana Smart SDG Cities Hub is now operational! The Ghana Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has identified the first ten cities that will be served by the Hub. The Ghana Smart SDG Cities Initiative mainstreams People Centred Smart Cites Principles into the four steps of SDG Cities – data, strategic planning, institutional development and investment in impact – and harnesses smart cities solutions to accelerate the SDGs while also reducing the digital divide. The City Scan Data Tool, initially piloted in **Mombasa, Kenya**, will now undergo testing in Ghana to collect spatial data on the SDGs.

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SDG Cities Hubs

SDG Cities Global Hub (World Urban Pavilion)

Since its inception in April 2022, alongside the launch of the World Urban Pavilion, the SDG Cities Global Hub embarked on a journey to redefine urban sustainability and resilience through the lens of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Canada and the world.

The Hub catalyzes cities worldwide for action, encouraging them to adopt and implement strategies for sustainable development. The Hub's primary mission is to **develop the core facets of UN-Habitat's SDG Cities initiative, facilitating a framework that supports cities to integrate SDGs into planning and development processes**.

By providing a platform for Canadian cities to showcase their urban innovations, the Hub facilitates an exchange of ideas and best practices globally. It also fosters strategic alliances with cities, investors, and stakeholders to accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

Impact

1. Technical Backstopping Support: Providing support in cities through assessments, planning, implementation, monitoring, and review processes tailored to the unique needs and contexts of each city.
2. Strategic Partnerships: By forging strategic partnerships with cities, investors, and other key stakeholders, the Hub unlocks opportunities for collaboration and investment in sustainable urban projects.
3. SDG Cities Recognition: SDG Cities recognition serves as both a benchmark and an incentive for cities globally to intensify their sustainability efforts.
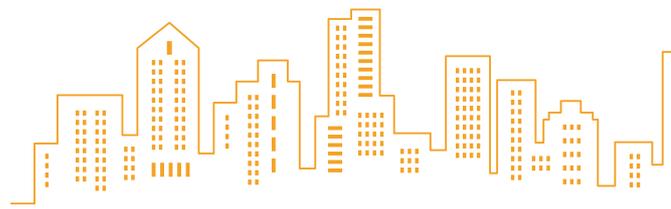
SDG Cities Global Hub (World Urban Pavilion)

4. SDG Cities Canada report: This first-of-its-kind report offers an analysis of the progress Canadian cities are making towards the SDGs, viewed through an urban perspective. It employs the Global Urban Monitoring Framework to assist cities in monitoring advancements. The report focuses on the methods cities use to adapt the SDGs to local contexts through new and culturally relevant strategies

World Urban Pavilion in Regent Park

Under the collaboration of:

UN@HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

URBAN ECONOMY FORUM

CMHC◆SCHL

Powered by:

Daniels
love where you live™

"

Today we are establishing a global knowledge exchange hub for sharing urban development best practices. Strategic partnerships between UN-Habitat, the Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation, and the Daniels Corporation aim to accelerate global urban development goals, contributing to a greener, healthier, and fairer planet.

Maimunah Mohd Sharif,
Executive Director, UN-Habitat
Speaking at the Inauguration of the World Urban Pavilion and SDG Cities Global Hub
April 21, 2022

Minister Ahmet Hussen visit to World Urban Pavilion Sister Neighborhoods programme in Mathare informal settlement (2018).

Looking Forward

The SDG Cities Global Hub remains committed to expanding its support and services, aiming to include more cities in its network and to deepen its impact on global urban sustainability. The lessons learned and successes achieved thus far will serve as a foundation for future initiatives, with a continued focus on innovative solutions, inclusivity, and resilience in the face of global challenges.

The SDG Cities Global Hub stands as a testament to the power of collaboration, innovation, and shared commitment towards a sustainable future. Without the collaboration of the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Daniel's Corporation, the Urban Economy Forum and cities in Canada and around the world, SDG Cities would not have become the great success it is today.

SDG Cities Windows

Women-Led Cities

A city planned for women is a city planned for all."
- UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif. Yet while women constitute 50% of the global population, only a mere 5% of cities worldwide are led by women, and a scant 8% of Fortune 500 companies have women at the helm. As the world rapidly urbanizes, it is crucial to address the increasing inequalities within our cities. Women-led Cities recognises this urgent need for change: a remarkable collaboration that has been underway over the past year. Championed by Trajano, CEO, Magazine Luiza, Chair of the Board 'Grupo Mulheres do Brasil' and associated companies; UN-Habitat's SDG Cities Global Initiative, UNCDF's IncluCity and the Ellaimpacta Alliance have been working towards the development of the Women-led Cities Initiative which is set to pilot in the Gambia and Brazil in 2024.

Sports and SDG Cities

UN-Habitat is getting sporty in cities! During the SDG Summit in New York, UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Sharif and International Olympics Committee President Thomas Bach signed a Letter of Intent to harness sport as a driver of sustainable development. This collaboration will leverage sport as a catalyst for sustainable urban development on the journey towards achieving the UN 2030 Agenda. The initiative will be integrated into the SDG Cities process, highlighting the role of sport in driving health, social inclusion, gender and peace outcomes. In December of 2023, the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Australia announced the city's participation in this initiative as an early adopter city. This builds on Brisbane's achievement of SDG Cities Gold Recognition, and its longer-term vision of achieving SDGs as part of the legacy of hosting the 2032 Olympic Games,

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Recognition

City recognition for outstanding contributions to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) involves a multistage process. It assesses local sustainability efforts, considering criteria and milestones that showcase a city's commitment to the global agenda of achieving inclusive and sustainable growth.

Silver

Cities Awarded
- Dhaka South, Bangladesh
- Cochabamba, Bolivia
- El Alto, Bolivia
- Santa Cruz, Bolivia
- Chillaness, Ecuador
- Penipe, Ecuador
- Limon Indanza, Ecuador
- Olmedo, Ecuador
- Nabon, Ecuador
- Espejo, Ecuador
- Kyebi, Ghana
- Chefchaouen, Morocco
- Penang Bay, Malaysia
- Braga, Portugal
- Mafra, Portugal
- Madinah, Saudi Arabia

Awarded when cities are onboarded and public commitments are made by mayors in relation to prioritising SDGs and leaving no one behind.

Gold

Cities Awarded
- La Paz, Bolivia
- Brisbane, Australia

Awarded when cities have evidence-based 2030 strategic plans and policies through inclusive and participatory data and strategic planning processes that engage women, youth and other key stakeholders.

Platinum

Awarded when cities demonstrate improved effectiveness of local institutions to deliver the SDGs compared to a baseline diagnostic

Diamond

Awarded when cities demonstrate measurable progress towards achieving their 2030 strategic plans

Global Advocacy and Events

UN-Habitat Assembly

One of the highlights of the second UN-Habitat Assembly, was the endorsement of a resolution on SDG Localization, which further recognised and strengthened UN-Habitat's mandate in this area. SDG Cities is the operational element of UN-Habitat's broader work in SDG Localization. During the Assembly the SDG Cities Team and partners organized impactful side events focusing on SDG Localization, including

On "Women-Led Cities" "Multilateral Collaboration for SDGs Implementation in Cities," and "SDG Cities Certification."

The 5th Urban Economy Forum

Cities, such as Edmonton and Toronto, employ diverse structures and strategies to promote safe and climate-friendly environments. Edmonton's Community Safety and Wellbeing (CSWB) strategy focuses on instilling purpose, safety, and stability in residents, aligning with reconciliation and anti-racism principles. It aims to eliminate systemic barriers and encourage transformative thinking. In contrast, Toronto's TransformTO plan demonstrates a commitment to addressing climate change, emphasizing successful strategies and global collaboration. TransformTO specifically targets achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2040. These presentations underscore the varied approaches cities are taking to build resilient, inclusive, and eco-friendly urban environments.

High Level Political Forum

The High-Level Political Forum is a pulse check for nations around the world to check their progress towards the achievement of the SDGs and reestablish priorities to accelerate this achievement. The theme of 2023's HLPF was "Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels." SDG Cities featured in 10 events at the High-Level Political Forum.

SDG Cities Global Conference

The third SDG Cities Global Conference held in Shanghai from October 28-30, 2023, brought together over 1,300 participants to discuss **Accelerating SDG Implementation at Scale**." Co-hosted by UN-Habitat, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of the People's Republic of China, and Shanghai Municipal People's Government, the conference addressed the urgent need to rescue off-track SDGs by 2030.

The focus was on the SDG Cities delivery model, emphasizing digital tools, regional technical support hubs, and finance instruments. The conference highlighted the importance of the SDG Cities Global Initiative in guiding local governments, showcased best practices, and explored the potential for a Local Finance Framework to help cities identify optimum instruments for financing their development priorities. The initiative aims to coordinate actions and accelerate the achievement of a better urban future, recognizing the unique needs and challenges of different cities.

United Nations General Assembly

The 78th General Assembly in New York themed "Rebuilding trust and accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda," highlighted 12 United Nations High Impact Initiatives. One of these was SDG Localisation, which spotlighted the SDG Cities and Women-Led Cities initiative.

An exhibition on "Localization of the SDGs" also demonstrated practical implementations by youth, cities, and local governments. Additionally, a special side event on Women-Led Cities convened women from various sectors to discuss collaborative efforts in inclusive leadership, economic empowerment, and reducing inequality for positive local transformation.

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Political Engagement and Partnerships

Resolution

During the second UN-Habitat Assembly which took place in Nairobi, Kenya between the 5th and 9th of June 2023, Brazil proposed and passed a draft resolution on **Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals.** The resolution detailed the promotion of the localization of the SDGs and bolstering local action to accelerate the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda.

Partnership

SDG Cities
Global Initiative

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IMPLEMENTING THE NEW URBAN AGENDA

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

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