Global Alliance for Urban Crises

Update on 2017 Progress

This paper was prepared by:[1]

GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR URBAN CRISES

Background and Executive Summary

The Global Alliance for Urban Crises (GAUC) is a global, multi-disciplinary and collaborative community of practice. It is an inclusive platform working to arrive at systemic change in the way we enable urban communities to prepare for, cope with and rapidly recover from the effects of humanitarian crises and forced migration. The Global Alliance for Urban Crises was launched during the World Humanitarian Summit on 24 May 2016.

To date, more than 70 organizations have signed the Urban Crises Charter – the Alliance's flagship document that outlines its priorities in dealing with urban crises, and thereby committed - with full institutional support, to contribute to achieving the goals of the Alliance. The initial timeframe to arrive at meaningful results is set at three to five years.

The Alliance governance structure is comprised of three main bodies: The Steering Group; Secretariat; and Working Groups, with members from across the following constituencies: United Nations / International Non-Governmental Organizations / Red Cross Red Crescent; Academia / Knowledge Management; Local Authorities; and Network of Professionals. Stakeholders from these four constituencies have together set up the governance structure and agreed on common priorities.

Alliance members have reported through the established community of practice on individual achievements against their commitment to the Alliance, which includes developing shared assessment and profiling tools, developing coordination mechanisms that fit the complexities of cities, developing urban crises response rosters with deployable capacity of urban professionals and strengthening the evidence base on characteristics of protracted urban displacement and resilience.

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[1] This paper was authored by the Global Alliance for Urban Crises Secretariat. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Secretariat.

Data sources

Ten of the Global Alliance for Urban Crises' member organizations - representing different constituencies, have listed their membership in the Global Alliance for Urban Crises as an important mean to achieve WHS commitments in their 2017 self-reports on the online Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformations (PACT).

The Alliance receives frequent updates on member's activities through regular Steering Group and Working Group meetings.

Achievements to date

The Global Alliance for Urban Crises co-hosted the All-members meeting with the European Commission for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (EU-ECHO) on 30-31 March 2017. The meeting convened over 55 participants from nearly 40 organizations across the Alliance's four constituencies. During the two-day meeting, participants discussed the Alliance's strategy, Strategic Priorities, Working Group work plans, how to expand and strengthen constituencies, resource mobilization/fundraising, and the advocacy and outreach needed to achieve Alliance goals. As a result, the participants detailed the Alliance's four Strategic Priority areas, and formed the Working Groups.

The Meeting of Working Groups of the Global Alliance for Urban Crises was convened on the side lines of *"L'internationalisation des collectivités territoriales,"* hosted by Cités Unies France, on Monday, 9 October 2017 in Paris, France. During the full day event, the four Alliance Working Groups had their first ever face-to-face meeting to develop an overall strategy to better operationalize Working Groups, review work plans, cross-cutting issues and modalities. During plenary sessions, Working Group members discussed advocacy strategies, primarily towards the World Urban Forum 9, resource mobilization and fundraising, and strengthening engagement with local authorities. The following day, the Alliance hosted a panel with Alliance members and mayors from Lebanon and Haiti, in addition to a closed meeting with Haitian mayors for their candid feedback on country-specific humanitarian response and Alliance initiatives. A total of 30 participants attended the meeting, representing 19 organizations across the four Alliance constituencies.

The Alliance was represented during the Ninth Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF9), which took place from 8-13 February 2018 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, by nearly 70 representatives from the Alliance membership, across the Alliance's four constituencies. WUF9 is the first time ever the crises dimension is represented at the World Urban Forum, with an increase in participation from the humanitarian community. The Kuala Lumpur Declaration recognizes that *"crises are increasingly urban"* and *"inclusive urbanization tools adapted to local contexts and to the nature of human made disasters and conflicts, as well as to guide humanitarian assistance, fast track recovery, and contribute to building and sustaining peace"* as an emerging challenge that requires urgent action and further work, echoing the Alliance's objectives for multi-partner, constituency-based coalitions to improve crisis preparedness and response in an increasingly urban world.

Since the beginning of 2018, the Alliance has welcomed the commitment and membership of new organizations such as the World Bank, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Huairou Commission, as well as the re-commitment of current members such as the European Commission for Humanitarian Aid Operations (EC/ECHO) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). ECHO has also committed financial resources to support the working groups.

The obstacles/impediments to progress

- **Uneven participation per constituency** Alliance members from the *Urban Professionals and Built Environment* constituency - including corresponding *Academic Institutions*, are not actively participating, potentially constrained by the Working Group set-up and the Alliance's predominant focus on adapting humanitarian responses to urban contexts. Colleagues from the built environment/urban professional sector have expressed that it is difficult to engage in the humanitarian dialogue, and that the Alliance's contribution to strengthening the capability of urban professionals to carry out risk-informed planning, has not been prioritized.

- **Governance Structure and Funding** The Secretariat has had a minimal set-up so far and only been able to handle a limited set of core functions, focused on administrative and logistical support. Two Secretariat positions have been reduced to one due to financial constraints. Securing sustainable funding for the Secretariat has been a challenge.

- **Profile and Communicating Results** There has been an ongoing discussion on how 'operational' the Alliance needs to be in terms of mobilizing joint action in current crises. Only marginal attempts have been made to 'mobilize' the coalition. This undefined profile/role relates directly to challenges in communicating results.

- **Advocacy** The Alliance has had limited cross fertilization with other change initiatives emerging from the World Humanitarian Summit (ex. Grand Bargain). The Alliance has limited connections to date with other change initiatives outside of the humanitarian sector, including with development actors, local authorities and other constituencies.

Recommendations

- To re-engage and strengthen the *Built Environment and Urban Professionals constituency* in the Alliance. Facilitate for cross-constituency dialogues – specifically increased interaction between the built environment/urban professionals and local governance partners. Produce a key outreach strategy over the next 12 months, and actively partake in built environment events relevant for Alliance members.

- Secure sustainable funding for the Secretariat.

- Operationalising the Alliance will rely on the consolidation of a robust community of practice, through which partners are committed to reinforcing capacities, contributing to policy development, and testing innovative tools and processes in the four Alliance priority areas. This means that the Alliance need to show results. One suggested way is to undertake a mapping exercise of what key Alliance members are already doing together and define such programmes as Alliance pilot projects that can be replicated in other contexts.

- Building on the previous successes of the Alliance at the World Humanitarian Summit, Habitat III and the World Urban Forum the Alliance needs to increase its voice and profile within these global discussions and improve communication/outreach by encouraging Alliance members to write blogs, journal articles, give interviews as part of an Alliance wide visibility analysis.

AGENDA FOR HUMANITY
5 CORE RESPONSIBILITIES
24 TRANSFORMATIONS