Evaluation Report 1/2020

Mid-Term Evaluation Accelerating
Climate Action through the Promotion
of Urban Low Emission Development
Strategies (Urban-LEDs II)

UN-HABITAT   URBAN LEDS   ICLEI

UN-HABITAT EVALUATION BRIEF

Mid-term Evaluation of Accelerating Climate Action Through the Promotion of urban Low Emission Development Strategies (Urban LEDS- II)

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URBAN LEDS
URBAN LOW EMISSION DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

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Local
Governments
for Sustainability

Introduction and Background

- The Urban-LEDS project Phase II ("*Accelerating climate action through the promotion of urban low emission development strategies" 2017-2021*) aimed to contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and enhance climate change resilience, promoting Urban Low Emissions Development Strategies (Urban LEDS) and climate action plans (CAPs) in cities in four emerging economies (*Brazil, India, Indonesia* and *South Africa,* supported under the Phase I ("*Promoting Low Emission Urban Development Strategies in Emerging Economy Countries*", *2012-2015*) expected to finalise and transfer the ownership of developed LEDS by using the proven approaches, adapting where necessary, and capitalizing on the existing partners as role models and peers.

- The Project supported two to three 'Model' cities per country and four to six 'Satellite' cities (56 overall) – and 12 selected European Union (EU) cities as resources – with enhanced vertical integration between different levels of governments, improved measuring, reporting and verification (MRV) of climate action at all levels of government and integration of those under the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC).

- The Project was financed by the EU in the amount of Euro Eight Million and implemented by UN-Habitat in close collaboration with ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI).

- The mid-term evaluation (MTE) served accountability and learning objectives: (i) with evidence on the extent of achieving expected results during April 2017-June 2019; and (ii) enhancing learning and identifying challenges potentially in need of improvement.

Evaluation Process and Methodology

The MTE used *Theory of Change* based methodology and relied on *triangulation, contribution analysis* and *Context Input Process Product (CIPP).* It was carried out by an independent evaluation consultant, Ms. Lilit V. Melikyan.

Sources of information included: (a) *Document review*; (b) *Surveys* of the stakeholders, and *Key informant interviews*, with 83 unique respondents; (c) Visits to South Africa and Rwanda (7-12 October 2019); and (d) EU Study Tour in June 2019, which the evaluator joined.

The evaluation was undertaken under resources constraints and changing timelines.

Solar water heaters installed in KwaDukuza, South Africa during Phase 1. © UN-Habitat

Overall Findings

Achievement of intended results and effectiveness:

The project envisioned five Intended Results (IR). It was on track for three of these and mostly on track for two (see Table).

Extent of achievement of Intended Results (IR)

	Intended Results (IR)	Rating	Indicators delayed
1	City-level climate action is integrated into the NDCs or equivalent document of the participating countries with the development and application of a harmonized MRV approach in the participating cities	On track	-
2	Increased capacities of urban stakeholders in all countries to implement climate action through international, regional and national state and city cooperation on urban climate action	On track	-
3	Enhanced capacities in the four new countries to engage in local climate action	Mostly On track	2
4	Adopted or further enhanced/completed Urban LEDS in new and existing Model Cities based on following the GCC process guidance	Mostly On track	3
5	Enhanced pre-2020 urban climate change mitigation is promoted in UNFCCC process and in other interested cities through the GCoM and similar regional and global networks	On track	-

Objective 1: *Enhance vertical and horizontal integration of climate action in support of National and Local strategies and policies*

Finding - IR1

- City-level action was often integrated into the National Determined Contributions (NDCs)/ equivalent documents of participating countries: The project's contribution was mostly indirect so far.

- Addressing multilevel governance in Phase II aimed at improved cooperation and vertical integration with better communication, coordination and reporting between levels of the governments. The cooperation with the national governments for this was strong overall, with some challenges in Brazil and Bangladesh. So far, eight City Profiles and country reports with recommendations were produced: Talanoa Dialogues in five countries helped with national ownership of these (e.g. in Indonesia). The use of harmonized monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) approach progressed with tracking of local targets and actions on GHG reduction, co-benefits and progress of GHG inventories' (GHG-I). Seven Phase I cities had quantifiable GHG reductions targets.

- Municipal frameworks were being enhanced to support the LEDS implementation, but only KwaDukuza (South Africa), reported results.

- Five national governments (Indonesia, Colombia, Rwanda, Brazil and South Africa) reported having included, to some extent, urban climate action and emissions' reductions in nationally determined contributions (NDCs), but direct contribution cannot be claimed: while the Project worked with the NDC Partnership, the links with NDC-revision processes could be stronger. Similarly, while the Project demonstrated the value of multi-level approaches in support of national sustainable development priorities (e.g. with co-benefits), the links to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)' processes could be stronger with discussions in Colombia and Brazil underway.

- The avenues for vertical integration at global level beyond Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM), Carbon Disclosure Project-ICLEI (CDP-ICLEI) unified reporting system, were explored.

Finding - IR2

- The capacities of stakeholders to implement climate action through multi-level cooperation on urban climate action and capacity building, has increased: in the new cities – at different speed, given their context.

- Horizontal integration through exchange of promising practices from Urban-LEDS to other cities was pursued through conferences and meetings. Working systematically with the associations of local governments, as in Indonesia, could be an important vehicle for vertical integration.

Objective 2: *Support and guide selected local governments in developing and approving urban LEDS in four new countries resulting in measurable GHG emission reductions and adaptation co-benefits; and Objective 3: Consolidate Urban LEDS achievements in cities in existing (Phase I) countries.*

Finding- IR3

- ***Guidance and training.*** The Project followed ICLEI's step-wise GreenClimateCities (GCC) process (GCC 2.0 with integrated climate action was available at the time of the MTE). Local and national government staff were trained (74 in the new, and 95 in Phase I countries), on Common Reporting Framework (CRF) to enable vertically integrated MRV, using classroom-based training, webinars (Colombia and Brazil) and one-to-one (India and Bangladesh). They were satisfied, but would have liked longer (and more comprehensive, covering also the basics, in some countries) as well as more practice-oriented training. Further roll-out was planned. In Indonesia and India national government representatives

delivered the training, facilitated by using national methodology of GHG-Is and MRV.

- **GHG-Is and GHG reports/updates** were in progress in most countries. The GPC (part of GCoM) format for GHG-I was not used in Colombia, Rwanda and the Lao PDR (but was likely) highlighting the need for stronger advocacy with the national governments.

- **Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessments (CRVAs)** were being elaborated in Rajkot and Coimbatore (India) with the ICLEI SAS CapaCITIES project. Their utility could have increased with simulation tools.

- **Pilot projects** in the cities were being assisted with defining and implementing the selection of the first batch of 27 projects being finalized in consultation with the municipalities, with different approaches: to reflect the findings of the CRVAs (India) or going in parallel, with the main aim to showcase LED and allow learning to be derived before the projects end (Rwanda). While both approaches are valid, several selection criteria could have been agreed, e.g. potential for scaling up, local government contribution, etc. The links with sectoral government agencies were not always assured.

- **Funding for local climate action.** The project cities were supported in pitching proposals for climate action funding, with so far 18 proposals to the Transformative Actions Program (TAP) pipeline and 12 proposals to other pipelines, e.g. the GCoM/European Investment Bank (EIB) Global City Climate Challenge (GCCC) connecting to financing agencies. The request for the Phase II cities to submit proposals was somewhat rushed with only four proposals received from Colombia. The submitted proposals were being reviewed for their quality at the time of the MTE, with those not yet ready planned to receive recommendations for improvement. The proposals covered a broad spectrum of resilience topics, including biodiversity and disaster risk reduction (DRR), highlighting the need for engagement with a wider range of government agencies and partners. The approaches differed by country in terms of supporting (to a limited extent, though) local project preparation: e.g. a deep-dive for selected proposals (Brazil); a pre-feasibility study on a priority infrastructure project (in Indonesia with the Cities Development Initiative for Asia); and training on project packaging (South Africa). At the time of the MTE, only two proposals were under consideration; one each by bettervest (crowdfunding) and by the Indonesian Government (plus in Fortaleza (Brazil), the Project helped with GHG-I revision for a World Bank financed project); this is understandable, with the project at midway. The bottom-up approach helped raise awareness of international good practices, however, more support was needed to guide the local governments in the development of funding proposals and to boost technical, financial and legal skills. This was recognized by the Project: the TAP concept was revised in 2018 to reflect that. But also, more focus was needed on *in-country* pitching events and *in-country* sources of finance (only a few cases of approaching banks and state funding agencies were reported – in South Africa, Rwanda and Brazil), including through Energy Saving Companies (ESCOS), using vertically integrated Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (V-NAMAs), and advocating for enhanced intergovernmental transfers for local climate action and support e.g. guarantee schemes. The learning from these would then have fed into the *Finance decision-*

making support tool under development at the time of the MTE. And finally, more was needed in terms of general awareness of climate finance- internationally and locally.

- **Sharing EU experience.** Based on agreed thematic clusters, the EU Resource cities (*Almada, Bologna, Helsinki, Warsaw, Hannover, Riga, Alba Iulia, Madrid, Aalborg, Budapest, Cork, and Bratislava*) offered to share their experience through: (a) Study tours in Europe e.g. in June 2019, attended by 28 representatives from 24 cities of 16 countries; (b) A set of planned webinars (four to six) before 2020 with a focus on implementation of projects; (c) Advocacy, and (d) Knowledge creation and transfer. A limited number of visits could be beneficial.

- **Peer-to-Peer (P2P) exchanges** were supported between Urban-LEDS project cities from Phase I and II with: (a) *Indonesian Study Tour* (April 2019) for the municipalities from the Lao PDR; (b) *Resilient Cities Asia-Pacific event* (2019*)*, and (c) *Resilient Cities Congress* (2019): more were planned. The participants found these useful, particularly the in-depth interactions. Opportunities for the national agencies to participate in international exchanges were very few, limiting the potential from joint learning with the local governments. In total, eleven P2P exchanges and virtual events with non-Urban-LEDS cities took place through South-South-North learning, but more focus could have been on the countries with best experience in specific areas.

- The assumption of active experience exchange between the model and satellite cities was overly optimistic as happening only with limited so far facilitation by the Project, contributing to the mismatch between the level of assistance to and the expectations from the satellite cities.

Finding -IR 4

- The project contributed to new and existing Model Cities adopting/enhancing Urban LEDS under review in Phase I cities, following the GCC process guidance, with a move to Climate Action Plans (CAPs), with an integrated approach to include climate change adaptation co-benefits, but in the new countries this was at initial stages with discussions underway (e.g. in Rwanda and in Lao PDR, the municipalities preferred having one strategy (local/district development) – an approach supported by the Project). The extent of this in satellite cities varied.

- Fortaleza and Betim, benefited from the cooperation with the Boston University (USA) and Technical University of Cologne (Germany), respectively, in the development of CAPs.

Objective 4: *Promote international, regional, national, sub-national and local government cooperation on urban climate action, leading to an increase in urban stakeholders' capacity to implement climate change*

Finding- IR5

- The Project contributed to enhanced: (a) Urban climate change mitigation promoted under UNFCCC through the GCoM and similar networks, and (b) Mission of the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) constituency at the UNFCCC. The awareness of GCoM was promoted, including the use of its Data Standard and

integrating GCoM information modules into 18 Urban-LEDS events. The Project cities and their staff participated in numerous events promoting Urban-LEDS at UNFCCC and the GCoM.

• The Project worked closely also with CDP; World Wildlife Fund's One Planet City Challenge (OPCC); Ambitious City Promises (ACP) project; GGGI; Under2Coalition's Climate Footprint Project, etc. Twenty-four Urban-LEDS staff participated in events of other climate initiatives.

Progress towards the goal

• The Project has made important steps toward its goal of "*Contributing to the reduction of GHG by the promotion of Urban LEDS in selected cities/towns in four emerging economies, in Colombia and three LDCs*" with 610 climate actions in 35 cities with an estimated emission reductions at 788 MtCo2e.

Performance by evaluation criteria

Relevance

• The Project was relevant to the global climate agenda by focusing on mainly secondary cities (given increased urbanization) in LDCs, which often are lacking in capacities, and coordinated action with partners globally and locally.

• The Project was in line with the climate change agenda of : (a) EU, e.g. as per the New Consensus of development (2017); and (b) UN-Habitat, promoting transformative change in cities, e.g. through the New Urban Agenda.

• The project design was overall relevant, with the focus on: (a) Capacity building; (b) Learning-by-doing and knowledge co-creation approach; and (c) Strengthened vertical and horizontal cooperation among the stakeholders. The TOC was sound, but the Project is too ambitious with respect to the budget.

Coherence

• The project was in tune with the agenda of the UNFCCC NDC process, GCoM and its data partners (actively seeking synergies with other urban climate actors and initiatives globally). and the global trend of moving to resilience. Still, cooperation could have been sought also with the Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) on the World Cities; Climate Initiative Bonds, the UN Environment's Climate Initiatives Platform, Investors on Climate Change, and UN Global Compact, Global Environment Facility's (GEF) and Sustainable Cities Initiative.

• The Project had synergies in the countries, but could have been more proactive and visible, e.g. with the UN agencies, especially to link with SDG and NDC processes.

Efficiency

• Despite being delayed and also the new cities taking time getting on board, the Project was mostly on track in achieving its targets (with certain delays with GHG-Is/CRVAs).

• The Project has displayed good adaptive management (e.g. in Brazil, where it engaged with a wide spectrum of stakeholders in a challenging political environment).

• Overall, UN-Habitat and ICLEI worked well together, however, there was a certain lack of clarity regarding the roles where only one partner was present.

• A number of municipalities would like more in-person interaction with management and advisors of the implementers- a concern likely linked to: (a) Limited budget for travel, (b) Overstretched staff, and (c) Some degree of misperception of the commitments by each party.

Electric motorbike taxis in Laos PDR. © UN-Habitat

Urban-LEDS Project Advisory Group South Africa kick off meeting. © UN-Habitat

- The deliverables are of good quality, based on the references globally.
- The Project was overall on budget (underspending in some countries) and – as perceived – with value for money.
- It was visible globally, but less in-countries, outside the Project Advisory Groups (PAGs). EU visibility could be stronger.

Partnerships

The project was overall successful in forging partnerships, both globally and locally, but it could connect more with the potential funders for climate action (private sector, banks, funds) and the EU Delegations in the countries.

EU Value added

While the Project was overall coherent with the EU strategy by e.g. working well with Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All), it could have added benefits compared to Member States' interventions only, if the potential synergies with two EU initiatives were better utilized: (a) *Global Climate Change Alliance Plus (GCCA+)* and, (b) the *LOCAL (Local Climate*

Conclusions

The Project was making good progress towards its intended results. It was contributing to increased government cooperation on urban climate action (UNFCCC, GCoM, CDP, etc.) at various levels. Integration of city-level climate action into NDCs was being facilitated with the harmonized MRV approach. Having a large number of committed to climate action cities was already an achievement. It will take time for the triggered process level changes to transform into performance improvements, but already, in Indonesia and India, the cities were viewed as changemakers. The potential of impact was larger where the needs were larger (e.g. in the Lao PDR), but the support needs to be very targeted. The capacities of stakeholders in all countries to implement climate action has increased, but at different speed, calling for institutionalization of training. The implementation of LEDS/CAPs, calls or a broader approach to pursuing increased financing.

Main Lessons

- Successful cooperation with municipalities, coupled