

World Vision’s Citywide Self-Sustaining Model Concept Note

Background

In 2008, recognising an organizational need to respond and adapt to the growing trend of urbanisation, and its negative impacts on the most vulnerable groups, especially children, World Vision applied an action research and learning approach to investigate the relevance of its current development theories, models and frameworks in diverse urban settings.

As a result of the first five-year phase of action research, a flagship report “*Making Sense of the City: Developing Evidence through Action Research and learning*” was published drawing on knowledge and experience of practitioners and thought leaders of the organisation involved in the urban research initiatives. Lessons and recommendations of internal and external practice detailed in the report contributed to the core elements of the *Citywide Self-Sustaining Model* summarised in this paper.

Citywide Self-Sustaining Model

The *Citywide Self-Sustaining Model* is an integrated approach to urban programming that aims to maximise World Vision’s contribution to large scale, sustained impact in the lives of the most vulnerable children in urban areas. The model leverages World Vision’s global branding and local presence, with emphasis on scaling with and through partners, building coalitions effective action, and influencing policy development and implementation.

The model proposes exponential growth with and through partners, generating sustainable social impact in cities, focusing on inclusion of the most vulnerable, especially children. It proposes a platform organization¹ design built on three key components:

- **Social component:** focused on promoting impact on children’s lives within cities, especially the most vulnerable
- **Business component:** focused on mobilizing people, ideas and resources to scale up proven practices
- **Operational component:** focused on organizational effectiveness, efficiency, capabilities and performance to maximize impact.



Figure 1: Cities for Children Framework

In alignment with World Vision’s global strategy towards 2030, the organisation’s vision is for children, especially the most vulnerable, to enjoy the opportunities and benefits of the city and to live life to all its fullness. In this vision, World Vision is:

- recognised as an organization that connects people within a holistic, transformational development approach, achieving citywide impact for children, especially the most vulnerable
- committed to the principle of inclusion; identifying the most vulnerable children, especially the invisible groups living in fragile pockets of the city and those affected by urban crises and disasters, advocating for their rights to access basic public services and dignity
- contributes to global research, discourse and dialogue that shape urban policy
- operates in fragile urban contexts, addressing the needs of the most vulnerable children and their families

¹ A Platform Organisation uses its available partners, assets and resources to find, connect and support those who share its purpose. A Platform Organization is a system where traditional clients or donors and traditional beneficiaries are seen as users connected to the value proposition and to the solutions proposed. By its crowd-sourcing solutions oriented design a Platform Organisations thrive on bringing people together to create best-fit outcomes.

- recognized as a partner of choice with capabilities to effectively mobilize multiple types of city actors in a networked approach to implement high quality urban programming and policy
- financially self-sustaining, with a lean operating structure and cost base. It exemplifies the ideal combination of both a flexible and entrepreneurial NGO
- sets the standard for high-quality, scalable urban programming for both its social development/humanitarian stakeholders, and the international donors and partners.

Core operating principles of the citywide self-sustaining model

- *Interventions at all levels of the city:* From neighbourhood, municipal to city levels to influence national policy
- *Depth vs breath:* Focus on contextual issues, make strategic choices to deliver quality
- *Do more with less:* Strive for operational efficiency and economies of scale
- *Partnerships for scale and sustainability:* Multi-stakeholder citywide engagement for capacity, resourcing, programming and policy influence
- *Leverage our global brand and local presence:* Influence global policy and advocacy informed by our urban evidence base.

Components of the citywide self-sustaining model

1. Social component

Cities for Children is World Vision's emerging, issue-based, programming framework for addressing children's vulnerabilities in urban contexts. It is a simplified narrative for practitioners and partners to make a difference at the grassroots level and inform policy change at the city level. It provides a platform for building alliances, partnerships and coalitions to focus on issues, seek ideas and solutions to promote inclusive and just cities where children thrive.² It is anchored in the Child Wellbeing Aspirations and is aligned with tested urban approaches developed by various UN agencies.

The framework (see figure 1) is comprised of four interlinked *domains of change* that are essential to the wellbeing of urban children: safety, health, resilience and prosperity in cities. Each of these *domains of change* address the physical, social, economic, political and environmental dimensions of development. Underpinning these domains is the enabling factor of advocacy and effective urban governance in seeking justice and inclusion of the most vulnerable, and promoting equity for all. The *Cities for Children* Framework provides a multi-disciplinary and integrated model to contribute to the achievement of Child Well-Being Outcomes in urban contexts.

Common to all four domains of change are (1) four strategic pillars that address the distinct common issues in all urban environments due to the dynamic nature of dense and diverse city settings and (2) four enablers of change that use urban advantages to support efficient scaling of programs to ensure an impact in dense and diverse urban environments (see boxes below).

² WVI's Cities for Children Framework was initially informed by UNICEF's Children Friendly Cities Framework, applied, adapted locally by WV's urban pilots

Four strategic pillars:

Social cohesion: Building social cohesion amongst diverse communities and promoting inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable groups

Urban governance: Strengthening the quality of urban governance, promoting community engagement, local-led advocacy in order to achieve citywide effective policy impact

Knowledge building: Supporting knowledge building through enhancing the accessibility, representation, accuracy of data and information to leverage and advocate for transformational change

Built environment: Improving the quality of the built environment, shared public space and service delivery

Four enablers of change:

Partnerships: Establishing strong citywide partnerships with and strengthening capacities of all key stakeholders to promote collective action and collaboration for quality, scale and impact

Technology: Utilising existing and new technological capacity and innovations to assist in effectiveness and scale up of urban programming, wherever possible.

Urban Planning and Design: Ensuring urban planning and design is inclusive, participatory and responsive to the needs and solutions of the most vulnerable groups in urban settings

Urban Policy: Ensuring that urban policy at all tiers of the city, from neighbourhood level to city and national level, promotes equity and advocates for sustainable development

2. Business component

The business component is the underlying logic that explains how the self-sustaining model creates, delivers and captures value. To adapt to the urban context, World Vision applies a business diversification approach to respond to multiple business contexts and opportunities within the city, building an impactful business portfolio and enabling technology for urban development.

World Vision's child-sponsorship business model acts as an initial means of investment and leverage to diversify into other business models such as Global consortia, Local Grant Acquisition, Impact Investing, Social Entrepreneurship and Implementing partner with a multi-level of local and global stakeholders seeking areas of mutual interest.

With a diversified portfolio of business models, the organization is able to perform a high level of stakeholder engagement and hence better mobilize people, ideas and resources needed for the level of changes required in the citywide system.

3. Operational component

The Operational Component of the platform organization ensures that key management functions are integrated and performing at maximum efficiency to deliver best social and business solutions. This component needs to adapt to cities' context depending on the size of the city, its density, diversity and dynamism as well as on World Vision's investments, capabilities and the need to be present in the city.

World Vision's engagement strategy in urban contexts

As a platform organization, World Vision's role in the city is to enable a generation of children, adolescents and young people to be protected and empowered to make positive impact in their own lives, their neighbourhoods and communities and cities and nations they live in.

World Vision's engagement with the urban residents, partners and local authorities is progressed through a variety of roles that the organization can play in urban contexts: (i) Community Mobiliser & Incubator, (ii) Program Broker & Monitor and (iii) Strategic Facilitator & Convenor. Urban programmes engage at multi-tiers of the city targeting neighbourhood, municipal/district, and city levels. The citywide approach allows for interventions at the neighbourhood and municipal/district levels to influence policy and city-planning and budgeting processes. This citywide approach is

mobilised through innovative partnerships to encourage the processes of co-design and co-management among the urban residents, private sector, government and other civil society actors.

The intended outcomes of the citywide self-sustaining model are:

- **Identification and inclusion of the most vulnerable children and groups** to ensure ‘*No one is left behind*’³. The city model highlights WV’s Christian commitment to justice and inclusion. The concept of Just Cities for Children will drive citizen participation, ownership, empowerment and inclusion of the most vulnerable children and communities, which are central to WV’s Christian principles. In addition, the framework will promote inter-faith dialogue, peace building, and the development of cohesive communities.
- **Networked organisation:** Urban contexts present opportunities for coalition building for collective action, policy level influence and scale up through partners. Urban environments also offer opportunities for diverse resource generation options, locally and globally, to scale up urban operations for sustainability.
- **Citywide effectiveness and impact:** Establishing strong citywide partnerships with strengthening capacities of all key stakeholders will promote collective action and collaboration for quality, scale and impact.
- **Contribution to global and national discourse and dialogue that shape urban policy** and the implementation of the *New Urban Agenda*⁴ at local, national and global level.

Our Priorities during our next Learning phase (2017- 2020):

- Launch of the ‘*Citywide Self-Sustaining Model*’ to be tested in select number of urban innovation sites for continued learning:
- Seek academic partnerships for joint research and learning to contribute to urban evidence base
- Promote innovations to design programs and tools to ensure The MVC are not left behind in the opportunities that cities offer
- Facilitate innovative partnerships to strengthen and scale up urban programs at country level leveraging our local presence and global brand, capability and credibility
- Document emerging evidence base to contribute to global discourse and dialogue that shape urban policy and the implementation of the *New Urban Agenda*⁵.

Contact the Urban Programming Team Joyati Das and Aline Rahbany for further information

- Email: urban_programming@wvi.org
- Read our publication “[Making Sense of the City: Developing Evidence through Action Research and Learning](#)”
- Visit our website: <http://www.wvi.org/urban>

³ ‘Leave no one behind’ is one of the key principles of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the [New Urban Agenda](#).

⁴ United Nations, General Assembly, *The New Urban Agenda*, A/CONF.226/4, (29 September 2016), available from <https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/>

⁵ Ibid