

World Vision's Citywide Self-Sustaining Model

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 promising practices detailed in the report contributed to the core elements of the *Citywide Self-Sustaining Model* proposed for consideration and application by World Vision country offices.

Citywide Self-Sustaining Model

The Citywide Self-Sustaining Model aims to maximise World Vision's contribution to transform the lives of the most vulnerable children in urban areas, including in fragile cities. The model leverages World Vision's global branding and local presence, with emphasis on scaling with and through partners, building coalitions for impact and effective action, influencing policy at national and city level.

The model proposes partnerships, innovation and reaching out to non-traditional development and humanitarian actors to generate 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, organisations, ideas and resources to scale up proven practices.
- **Operational component:** focused on organizational effectiveness, efficiency, capabilities, partnerships and performance to maximize impact.

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.

Core operating principles of the Citywide Self-Sustaining Model

- *Inclusion of the most vulnerable*: Citywide approach for equity and inclusion “Leaving No One behind”
- *Depth vs breath*: Focus on contextual issues, make strategic choices to deliver quality
- *Do more with less*: Operational efficiency and economies of scale
- *Partnerships for scale and sustainability*: Multi stakeholder engagement across all levels of city governance for resourcing, programming and policy influence and city wide impact

Components of the Citywide Self-Sustaining Model

1. Social component

Cities for Children is World Vision’s issue-based, programming framework for addressing children’s vulnerabilities in urban contexts. It presents a simplified narrative for practitioners and partners to address contextual issues at the grassroots level and inform policy change at the city and national level. The framework 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 WV’s Child Wellbeing Aspirations and 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 children’s well-being in urban contexts.



Figure 1 - The Cities for Children framework

The goals of each domain are:

1. **Safer Cities**: To ensure that children and their families live in a safe and protected environment, free from violence, abuse, exploitation and harm.
2. **Healthy Cities**: To strengthen availability of and access to public health services and contribute to healthy urban environments where children thrive.
3. **Prosperous Cities**: To create an enabling environment for overall livability focusing on inclusive education, pro-poor employment, local asset building and greater economic productivity for youth.
4. **Resilient Cities**: To ensure children and their families are prepared to respond to, recover and rebuild from urban shocks, stressors and vulnerabilities.
5. **Just Cities**: To create and contribute to just, equitable and inclusive cities where the vulnerable are formally recognized and are able to exercise their rights.

Box 1: Domains of change goals

² WVI’s Cities for Children Framework was initially informed by UNICEF’s Children Friendly Cities Framework, applied and adapted locally by WV’s urban pilot in Indonesia

Common to all four domains of change are (1) four strategic pillars that address the distinct issues common to almost all urban environments due to the dynamic nature of dense and diverse city settings and (2) four enablers of change that are urban advantages which could be used as instruments for scale, sustained change and impact in dense and diverse urban environments.

The *Cities for Children Framework* enables multiple World Vision entities to develop their urban-specific entry projects addressing the relevant domain of change guided by the strategic pillars and enablers of change. Our programs engage communities and partners starting with an issue based approach at the neighbourhood level and scaling up to municipal/district and city level to achieve citywide impact and sustainability. World Vision acts as a catalytic partner for citywide impact addressing child vulnerabilities at the grassroots level, advocating for policy reform in relation to specific issues of the city.

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 at all levels, promoting community engagement with decision making processes, 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 inclusion and transformational change*

Built environment, basic services and public space: *Improving the quality of the built environment, shared public space and service delivery for safety, security and well-being of children and their communities*

Enablers of Change:

Partnerships: *Establishing citywide partnerships with diverse city actors 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 designing smart and inclusive cities.*

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

Urban Policy: *Ensuring that urban policy at all tiers of the city, from neighbourhood 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 entry point to community development and initial means of investment to leverage and 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 at a high level of stakeholder engagement and hence better mobilize people, ideas and resources needed for transformation 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 proposes adaptation to cities' context depending on the size of the city, its density and dynamism as well as consider World Vision's investments, capabilities and value proposition in diverse urban environments.

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 (iii) Strategic Facilitator & Convenor. Urban programmes engage at multi-tiers of the city targeting neighbourhood, municipal/district, and city levels. This citywide approach is mobilised through innovative partnerships to encourage the processes of co-design and co-management by diverse stakeholders including urban residents, private sector, government and other civil society actors.

The intended outcomes of the 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 commitment to justice and inclusion. The concept of *Just Cities for Children* aims to 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 promotes inter-faith dialogue to promote peace building and support the development of cohesive communities that promote equity and inclusion of the marginalised in city plans.
- **Innovative Programming for citywide impact** by launching a citywide network model which focuses on creating platforms of knowledge and linkages among diverse actors; engaging neighbourhood communities and partners to address local issues scaling up to municipal/district and city level to achieve citywide impact and sustainability. World Vision acts as a catalytic partner creating citywide networks that focus on child vulnerabilities at the grassroots level, advocating for policy reform addressing specific issues of the city.
- **Partnerships for quality and scale:** Urban environments offers opportunities for the organisation to explore diverse programming and resource generation opportunities locally and globally, to scale up urban operations for sustainability. This approach leverages WV's global branding and local presence to encourage coalition building for collective action, policy level influence and scale up through partners.
- **Contribute to global discourse and dialogue that shape urban policy** and the implementation of the *New Urban Agenda*⁴ at local, national and global level.

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/>