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The UN estimates that over 55% of the world's poor live in urban areas and this proportion will increase as population rises with urban areas in developing countries accounting for 95% of global population growth from 2000-30.

Informal settlements are growing in Commonwealth cities, resulting in limited access to safe water, sanitation, secure tenure, permanent dwellings, and economic opportunities. Recognising these challenges the Commonwealth has set a goal of "demonstrated progress towards adequate shelter for all with secure tenure and access to essential services in every community by 2015". ComHabitat has also been established to bring together key Commonwealth agencies involved in supporting sustainable human settlement development and achieving the Commonwealth Goal 1.

City administrations are at the frontline of managing the effects of rapid urbanisation and ensuring that cities remain centres of growth across the Commonwealth. The need for well planned, inclusive and pro-poor city development strategies is essential to securing a positive future for our cities.



The Commonwealth Local Government Forum Inclusive Cities Network (ICN)

In response to the proposal by CLGF Board Member Hon Kumari Selja, Minister for Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, India, the ICN was formally launched at the CLGF Conference in Freeport, Bahamas, on a pilot basis (2009-11).

At the heart of the ICN is a desire among Commonwealth cities to share experience, information, know-how and good practice to help improve the delivery of local government services to all citizens, in particular those often marginalised through unemployment, poverty, inadequate housing, age, migration, limited education and gender, as well as migrant status.

In line with the *Commonwealth Aberdeen Principles*, the CLGF ICN will promote inclusiveness, which reflects the social, economic, environmental and cultural needs of the entire community in local decision making. The work of the ICN also contributes to other *Aberdeen Principles* -

promoting partnership, participation, open government and the adequate and equitable allocation of resources.

The cities which are part of the pilot network are: Ahmedabad, India; Birmingham and Cardiff, UK; Brisbane, Australia; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Durban and Johannesburg, South Africa; Freetown, Sierra Leone; Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, Port of Spain; Trinidad and Tobago; and Surrey, British Columbia, Canada. Following meetings hosted by Ahmedabad and Johannesburg, members have recommended to the CLGF Board that the network should invite other Commonwealth cities to join and participate.

Benefits of ICN membership

- Membership of the ICN offers cities an opportunity to learn from and contribute to practitioner-led exchange of experience and learning, focused on the improvement of local government service delivery to all citizens across the Commonwealth, with a particular emphasis on governance, local economic development, migration, homelessness, youth, unemployment, gender, and poverty reduction.
- The ICN provides member cities with a forum in which to raise and discuss common issues, and practical strategies, approaches and solutions for ensuring inclusion and inclusive development strategies. There will be opportunities to learn from practical case studies and experienced practitioners, supported by peer group reviews and policy exchanges.

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- Through the sharing of good practice, specific transferable models of service delivery will be developed and made available, initially via the availability of detailed case studies/toolkits.
- Transfers of good practice, knowledge sharing, and learning from fellow practitioners will help build the capacity of council staff in participating in cities.
- Members will have the opportunity to explore bilateral partnerships with fellow member cities around specific issues, which may result in longer-term partnerships/provision of technical advice/support.
- Member cities will have access to the wider CLGF member network and expertise in 54 Commonwealth countries. Local government associations, ministries and associate members comprising academic and professional bodies specialised in local government are members of CLGF. The ICN will also forge partnerships with the *ComHabitat*¹ network and other international partner organisations, such as UN Habitat and Cities Alliance.

Commitments by member cities

As a member of the ICN, cities will agree to:

- Share good practice, policies, know-how, experience and learning on inclusive city development and governance.
- Ensure that membership of the network is formally agreed at both political (mayor/leader) and administrative (CEO/city manager) level.
- Designate a staff member as the ICN contact person, responsible for liaison and the exchange and dissemination of relevant good practice policies.
- Participate actively in ICN activities and networking opportunities. Member cities should, where practicable, agree to cover the costs of their participation in ICN activities.
- Host a meeting of the ICN (meetings will be rotated around city members as far as practicable, in consultation with network members) and assist with the logistics of welcoming other ICN members to your city, including sharing practical case studies in the city.



1. *ComHabitat* partners include: the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Foundation, CLGF, Commonwealth Association of Planners, Commonwealth Human Ecology Council and Homeless International. The *Scoping the State of Commonwealth Cities Report, 2010*, produced by ComHabitat, sets out many of the challenges facing cities in managing urbanisation and reducing poverty. For the report please visit: <http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com/Areasofwork/Humansettlements/StateoftheCommonwealthCities>

Joining the Network

Membership of the Inclusive Cities Network is open to all existing CLGF cities and cities/councils affiliated to those national local government associations which are members of CLGF. Applications to join the ICN are invited from cities across the Commonwealth and further information can be obtained from:

The Coordinator,
CLGF Inclusive Cities Network
Commonwealth Local Government Forum
16a Northumberland Avenue
London WC2N 5AP
UK

The ICN is practitioner-led and Birmingham currently acts as the coordinator, supported by Ahmedabad, Brisbane and Johannesburg.