



MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE FOR INTEGRATED URBAN PLANNING

A Guide for multilevel action
based on learnings from UrbanShift

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This report was developed based on the outcomes of the National-Local Dialogues conducted in the project countries by ICLEI’s Regional Offices namely, ICLEI East Asia Secretariat, ICLEI South Asia, ICLEI Indonesia, ICLEI Africa, ICLEI Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, ICLEI South America Secretariat, ICLEI Argentina, with the support of ICLEI World Secretariat.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABOUT ICLEI - LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is a global network working with more than 2,500 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development. Active in 125+ countries, ICLEI influences sustainability policy and drives local action for low emission, nature-based, equitable, resilient and circular development. ICLEI’s Members and team of experts work together through peer exchange, partnerships and capacity building to create systemic change for urban sustainability.

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CITATION

This publication should be cited as: “*ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, 2025. UrbanShift Multilevel Governance Report. Bonn, Germany.*”

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CONTENTS

Foreword.....	4
Executive Summary	5
How to use this report.....	9

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT 10

Why multilevel governance matters for urban climate action?	12
What are National-Local Dialogues?	14
Role of ICLEI and city networks in National-Local Dialogues.....	15
How Roadmaps Can Be Used as Implementation Tools	16
Role of Implementing Agencies	17

HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUES18

China.....	22
India.....	24
Indonesia.....	26
Morocco	28
Rwanda.....	30
Sierra leone	32
Argentina.....	34
Brazil.....	36
Costa rica	38

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS. 40

Challenges and Recommendations For a New Era of Multilevel Governance	42
Good practices for future National-Local Dialogues	43
National-Local Dialogues at the heart of UrbanShift.....	47

FOREWORD



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President, ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability

Climate change is no longer a distant threat - it is a lived reality in every community. Across the world, cities and regions are battling heatwaves, floods, rising seas, and the growing human and economic toll of climate disruption. Yet, even as we act on the front lines, local governments receive less than 10% of global climate finance, despite generating more than half of the world's GDP and being responsible for shaping the very systems - transport, buildings, waste, energy - that determine national emissions trajectories. This mismatch between responsibility, impact, and resources is one of the greatest barriers to effective global climate action.

To close this gap, we need a fundamental shift in how climate governance works. Multilevel governance is no longer optional - it is the engine that makes ambitious, timely, and financed climate action possible. But recognition alone is not enough. We must embed multilevel climate action into how all levels of government plan, finance, and deliver climate solutions in their country, in every country.

This report demonstrates exactly that. Through UrbanShift's National-Local Dialogues and the Roadmap process, we see how structured national-local collaboration unlocks stronger and more coherent policies, clearer mandates,

and better-financed projects. Action in cities, guided and led by their local governments, can be implemented faster if the national level engages in leadership and support - closing up to 37% of the ambition gap in CHAMP-endorsing countries. When local knowledge and national authority align, climate ambition becomes implementation; intention becomes measurable impact.

We now stand at a pivotal moment. COP30 hosted by Brazil and the global "Mutirão" spirit calls for a shift from negotiation to implementation - one that centers cities, regions, and local communities as indispensable partners in delivery. This requires more effective and formalized mechanisms, localized finance, and a governance architecture where every level of government pulls in the same direction. Together we are stronger!

As ICLEI's President, I see daily the innovation and determination of our cities and communities across the world. With true multilevel governance, local leadership can become the force that transforms national commitments into local, national and global progress. I hope this report inspires leaders at all levels of government to continue to push for bolder action leading to more accelerated climate action.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

National governments can deliver their climate and environmental commitments but need local governments and local action in cities to do so efficiently and to the necessary level of ambition. In turn, local governments and their cities require clear mandates and resources, also to access the required finance without explicit national engagement, guidance and support.

In the UrbanShift project, funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) under GEF-7, we explored this in a practical approach in nine countries, co-designed a way forward and close this gap: National-Local Dialogues (NLDs) addressing Multilevel Governance (MLG) and a wide array of topics that have the potential for high impact local action and could contribute to national targets, were organized. These dialogues led to eight co-developed Country Roadmaps owned by their respective national and local governments, outlining a way forward on how MLG could support and advance joint and collaborative action across different levels of government.

This report outlines how UrbanShift and ICLEI guided the approach. It distills what happened in the dialogues - what worked, what did not, and how others can replicate and scale this impactful MLG model. This report addresses national line ministries, mayors and city officials, as well as development partners and financiers who are key to ensuring we accelerate climate action, moving from strategy and plans to real projects on the ground.



WHAT ARE NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUES?

National-Local Dialogues (NLDs) are structured, multi-stakeholder meetings that bring national and local governments together around concrete urban climate topics, such as flood risk, waste, metropolitan governance, or climate finance.

Under UrbanShift, two NLDs were planned in each country to:

- identify governance and finance barriers,
- agree shared priorities and commitments, and
- co-create a country-specific Multilevel Governance Roadmap that keeps the process going beyond the life of the project.

The NLDs followed the [Talanoa Dialogue](#) approach:

1. *Where are we?* Assessing current policies, finance, and capacities
2. *Where do we want to go?* Defining shared goals and outcomes
3. *How do we get there?* Identifying actions, roles, and financing pathways.



WHAT DID URBANSHIFT AND ICLEI DO?

Through UrbanShift, ICLEI and partners:

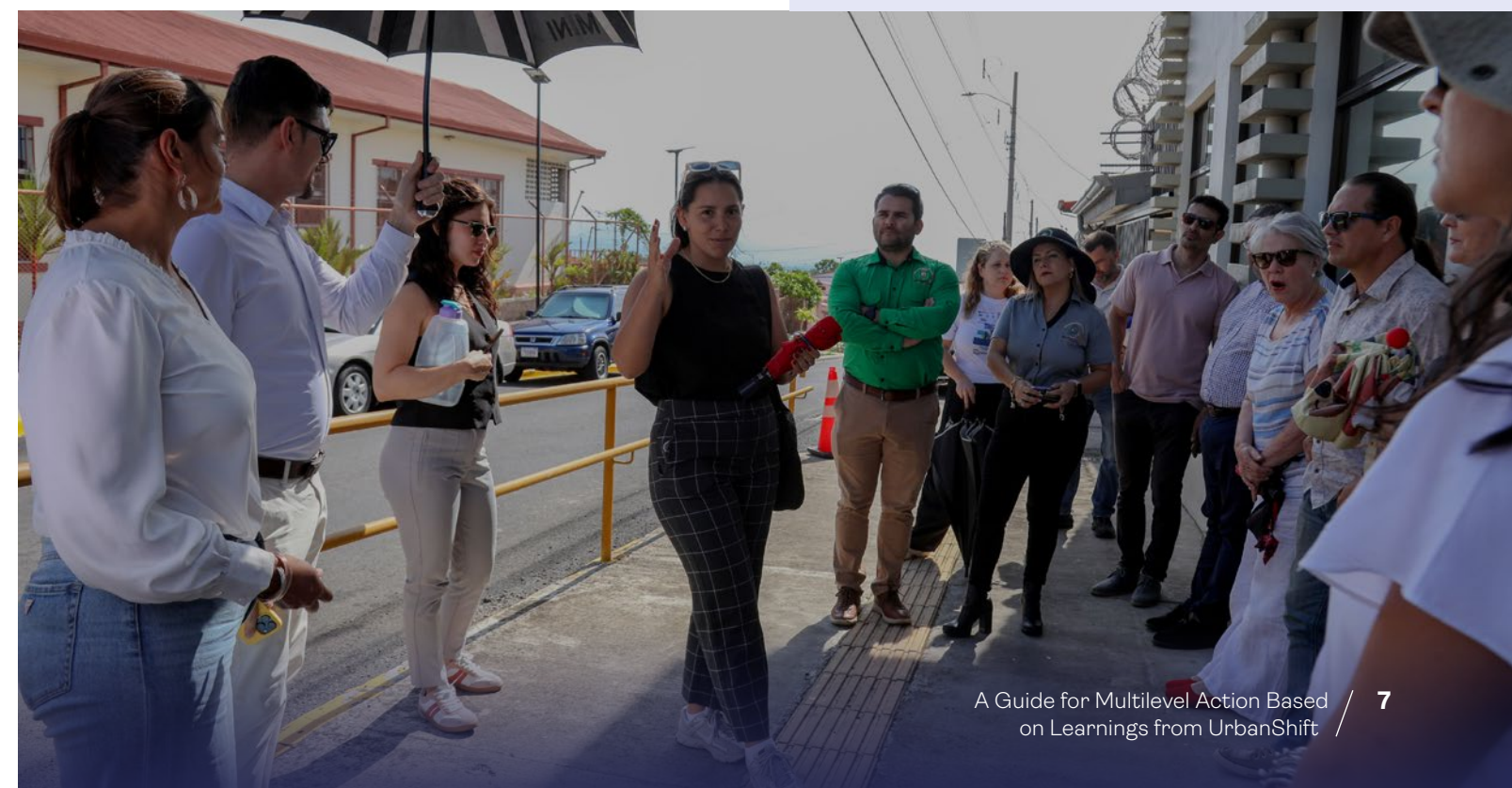
- **Convened over a hundred institutions** across nine countries, including national ministries, local governments, cities, financial institutions, academia, and civil society.
- **Designed and facilitated NLDs** tailored to each country's governance context and priority themes selected by governments.
- **Developed Multilevel Governance Roadmaps** that translate MLG dialogue outcomes into practical steps, timelines, and institutional arrangements.
- **Connected local processes to global climate agendas**, drawing on ICLEI's long-standing role in global climate negotiations and city networks.

The result is a tested methodology for turning multilevel governance from a concept into an effective, engaging embedded practice that all levels of government can co-design and co-own to enhance coordination and implementation. It can also inform GEF programmes and those of other donors, as a key performance indicator.

WHAT DID COUNTRIES FOCUS ON?

- **China** strengthened alignment between its dual-carbon goals and city-level planning on low-carbon development and urban biodiversity.
- **India** focused on sustainable and smart infrastructure, then on innovation and transit-oriented development, linking national programmes with city-level pilots and gender-sensitive mobility.
- **Indonesia** shifted from planning to climate finance, working with ministries and finance institutions to make city projects bankable and inclusive, including through Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) approaches.
- **Brazil** used metropolitan regions as laboratories for multilevel governance, designing roadmaps for resilient, low-carbon metropolitan development under the CITInova II project.
- **Argentina** used the dialogues to diagnose institutional and financial bottlenecks and to keep city-level climate ambition moving through periods of political transition.
- **Costa Rica** moved from peri-urban land use and green economy to tackling urban flooding with nature-based solutions and new legal and financing tools.
- **Rwanda** linked flood resilience and biodiversity with the preparation of its third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0), putting local governments at the centre of national climate planning.
- **Morocco** will contribute further lessons on anchoring MLG in national climate policies on circularity and waste management.
- **Sierra Leone** used an UrbanShift workshop as its first multilevel engagement on informal settlements and waste, framing behaviour change and informal workers as core elements of climate-resilient planning.

Despite the different thematic focus areas, these dialogues revealed a common pattern: when multilevel governance is intentional, adequately resourced, and institutionally anchored, action in cities can accelerate and visible progress is made towards achieving national targets.



KEY LESSONS FOR A NEW GENERATION OF MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

The cross-country analysis in this report highlights a set of recurring lessons:

- Institutional fragmentation is the norm, not the exception. Clear roles and effective coordination mechanisms between all levels of government are essential, also with horizontal coordination across line ministries and government departments.
- Finance and adequate resources, including a competent team in place, are the make-or-break factors. Many local governments are ready with ideas and pilots, but lack access to the necessary finance, technical assistance, also enabling fiscal and policy frameworks.
- Political turnover and crises disrupt, unless processes and systems are properly institutionalized and effective. The impacts of COVID-19 and government changes slowed implementation where MLG processes depended on individuals rather than institutions. As such a more resilient approach is also recommended.
- Inclusion cannot be assumed. Women, youth, and marginalized groups remain under-represented in decision-making. Where inclusion was actively designed in, outcomes were more legitimate and robust.



To address these gaps, the report proposes practical recommendations:

- Embed NLDs and MLG Roadmaps in national policy and planning cycles (NDCs, national urban policies, development plans).
- Treat Roadmaps as living implementation tools, not static reports, with clear milestones, responsibilities, and monitoring.
- Use NLDs to link national ambitions to city projects and investment pipelines - ideally as part of NDC implementation and investment plans.
- Design MLG processes to be inclusive and gender-responsive from the start.
- Build feedback loops so that learning from implementation can feed back into national policy and inform future dialogue.

For the Global Environment Facility and other funders, the NLD and Roadmap model offers:

- A proven approach to strengthen enabling environments for urban climate investment.
- A way to de-risk and accelerate city project pipelines, by aligning policies, institutions, and finance before major or key investments.
- A set of tested country experiences that can inform the next generation of GEF projects and other multilateral programmes.

UrbanShift shows that relatively modest investments in multilevel governance can unlock much larger climate and development co-benefits. This report presents the evidence, tools, and stories that partners can now build on.



HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

This report is designed to be practical.



IF YOU WORK IN A NATIONAL MINISTRY, START WITH:

- Section 1 for the core concepts (National–Local Dialogues, Multilevel Governance, Roadmaps, Implementing Agencies), and
- Section 3 for common challenges and concrete recommendations.



IF YOU WORK IN A CITY OR REGIONAL GOVERNMENT, START WITH:

- the country pages in Section 2 to see how other cities used NLDs, and
- the checklists at the end of Sections 1 and 3 to design or request a similar process in your country.



IF YOU ARE A DEVELOPMENT PARTNER OR FINANCIER, FOCUS ON:

- Section 3 to understand where support is most needed, and
- the country pages in Section 2 to see how NLDs created entry points for investment.

Each section ends with 2–5 concrete actions that can be taken or requested to be taken, considering local context.

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Introduction and Context

1



WHY MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE MATTERS FOR URBAN CLIMATE ACTION?

Climate change cuts across administrative boundaries and sector silos. Cities manage land use, transport, buildings, waste, and many public services, but national governments set the legal, fiscal, and policy frameworks. Multilevel governance (MLG) describes how these different levels of government work together, and with other stakeholders, to design and implement climate solutions.

Effective MLG creates the institutional bridge between national ambitions and local realities. It enables climate mitigation and adaptation strategies to be jointly designed, financed, and delivered.



1. ALIGNING NATIONAL AMBITIONS WITH LOCAL REALITIES

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and long-term strategies are implemented through decisions taken in cities and regions. Without effective MLG, there is a gap between national climate targets and what local governments can realistically deliver.

In countries such as Indonesia and China, NLDs showed that achieving net-zero and dual-carbon goals depends on integrating low-carbon principles into local planning. Local governments control land use, mobility systems, and waste management, but need enabling policies, finance, and guidance from national ministries.



2. POLICY COHERENCE AND INTEGRATION

Climate action affects many sectors at once, including energy, housing, transport, biodiversity, and finance. MLG makes it easier for these sectors to work together.

Structured dialogue mechanisms, such as NLDs, help ministries and local authorities align strategies rather than creating overlapping or conflicting policies. For example, Rwanda's first dialogue brought together environment, infrastructure, and local government actors to jointly address flood resilience through nature-based solutions.



3. FINANCING AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

National governments typically access international climate finance, while local governments identify and implement projects. MLG clarifies how resources flow between these levels and who is accountable.

In Indonesia, for example, the second NLD focused on climate finance, bringing together ministries of finance and planning, national finance institutions, and cities. This created a shared understanding of what makes city projects bankable and how different instruments can be used.



4. ACCOUNTABILITY, LEARNING, AND ADAPTATION

Effective governance is not a one-off decision but an ongoing process. MLG provides feedback loops between national and local levels:

- monitoring progress,
- identifying bottlenecks, and
- adapting policies as conditions change.

Regular NLDs and Roadmap reviews are practical tools for this adaptive management.



5. INCLUSION AND LEGITIMACY

Climate policies need public support to succeed. MLG can create spaces for women, youth, civil society, and the private sector to participate in decision-making and implementation.

In Indonesia's 2025 dialogue, for instance, mainstreaming Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) in climate finance discussions showed how governance choices directly affect equity and social outcomes.

For national or local government officials, effective multilevel governance means:

- knowing who your main counterparts are across levels of government,
- having regular, structured opportunities to coordinate with them, and
- having agreed ways to share information, finance, and accountability.

WHAT ARE NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUES?

A National–Local Dialogue (NLD) is a structured meeting or series of meetings that brings together national and local governments, with other stakeholders, to strengthen collaboration on sustainable urban development and climate action.

Under UrbanShift, NLDs were designed to:

- build a shared understanding of the main urban climate challenges in each country,
- identify governance and finance barriers, and
- agree on a small number of concrete commitments and next steps.

In each project country, UrbanShift planned two NLDs on topics of national and local importance. These dialogues became the operational mechanism of multilevel governance, providing a formal platform for vertical coordination between levels of government and horizontal collaboration across sectors.

Every NLD followed the [Talanoa Dialogue approach](#), structured around three guiding questions:

1. WHERE ARE WE?

Reviewing current policies, plans, finance, and institutional capacities.

2. WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

Defining shared objectives and the direction of travel.

3. HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Identifying policy actions, investments, and reforms, and agreeing who is responsible for what.

The outcomes for each country include:

- documented progress and policy commitments on sustainable urban development, and
- a Multilevel Governance Roadmap that sets out how coordination will continue.

National–Local Dialogues are therefore not one-off events. They are milestones in a longer process of governance reform and collaboration on climate action.

ROLE OF ICLEI AND CITY NETWORKS IN NLDs

City networks such as ICLEI play a central role in designing and delivering NLDs.

Through UrbanShift, ICLEI:

- helped ministries and cities agree on dialogue topics and participants,
- facilitated discussions using tested methodologies,
- documented outcomes and supported the development of Roadmaps, and
- connected national processes to international initiatives and peer learning.

This combination of neutral convening, technical support, and global connectivity is one of the main value-adds of the UrbanShift approach.

NLD PLANNING CHECKLIST



If you are planning an NLD, you will need to:

- ☐ nominate a lead ministry and a city focal point,
- ☐ agree on a clear theme and expected outputs,
- ☐ invite the right mix of national, local, finance, and non-government actors,
- ☐ allocate time in advance for follow-up and Roadmap development.



HOW ROADMAPS CAN BE USED AS IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

A Multilevel Governance Roadmap is a country-specific plan that translates dialogue outcomes into a sequence of concrete actions, responsibilities, and coordination mechanisms.

Under UrbanShift, Roadmaps were used to:

- formalize relationships between national ministries, local governments, and development partners,
- specify policy and regulatory actions, responsible agencies, and indicative timelines, and
- maintain coordination beyond the UrbanShift project cycle.

ROADMAP DEVELOPMENT

While each country's Roadmap is different, most include:

- a short description of the governance challenge and the dialogue's main conclusions,
- a table of agreed actions, responsible institutions, and target dates,
- references to existing policies, strategies, or programmes that the actions connect to, and
- provisions for follow-up meetings or review points.

Developing a Roadmap usually involves:

1. Establishing a small advisory or steering group that includes key ministries, local governments, and Executing Agencies.
2. Summarizing the NLD's outcomes in a simple format (e.g. actions, actors, timelines).

3. Validating the draft with senior decision-makers.
4. Agreeing how progress will be monitored and reported.

In several UrbanShift countries, these advisory groups evolved into more permanent coordination forums, helping to embed multilevel governance in national systems.

A well-designed Roadmap acts as a bridge between the *short-term project cycles* (typically 4–6 years), and the *long-term national visions and climate strategies* (for example, Indonesia 2045, Rwanda 2050). It helps ensure that pilot projects and early investments are aligned with long-term goals, and that learning from implementation feeds back into national policy.

ROADMAP CHECKLIST



- ☐ Keep the document short and action-oriented.
- ☐ Use simple language that non-experts can understand.
- ☐ Assign actions to institutions, not individuals, to protect against staff turnover.
- ☐ Review and update the Roadmap regularly, ideally at each NLD or equivalent meeting.

ROLE OF IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES

Implementing Agencies are central to how UrbanShift links multilevel governance with on-the-ground investments.

Through their work in participating cities, Implementing Agencies engage directly with local officials, urban practitioners, and national governments to design and implement cross-cutting solutions that address multiple urban issues. They are also key partners in delivering National–Local Dialogues.

In the context of NLDs and Roadmaps, Implementing Agencies:

- act as institutional enablers, helping to connect local priorities with national policies and global funding mechanisms,
- provide technical advice on project design, safeguards, and monitoring,
- support stakeholder engagement, helping ministries to involve the right sectors and actors, and
- ensure that dialogue outcomes inform the projects they are implementing on the ground.

In several UrbanShift countries, collaboration with Implementing Agencies was strongest where they already had a long-term presence and strong relationships with national ministries. In those cases, they were able to:

- build on existing programmes to convene NLDs,
- ensure high-level participation, and
- integrate lessons from the dialogues back into investment decisions.



ENGAGING WITH IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES CHECKLIST



- ☐ involving Implementing Agencies early in the design of NLDs and Roadmaps,
- ☐ clarifying roles and expectations between national ministries, city networks such as ICLEI, and Implementing Agencies, and
- ☐ aligning capacity-building and investment pipelines with the priorities identified through NLDs.

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Highlights of National-Local Dialogues

2



COSTA RICA

THEMES: Nature-based solutions, water management, and peri-urban resilience

KEY STAKEHOLDERS:

- Ministries of Environment and Housing
- UNEP
- Local governments - San José, Cartago, Alajuela
- Academia and NGOs

BRAZIL

THEMES: Metropolitan governance, resilience, and integrated urban planning

KEY STAKEHOLDERS:

- Ministry of Cities, Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MCTI) and Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MMA)
- Metropolitan regions - Belém, Florianópolis, Teresina-Timon

ARGENTINA

THEMES: Low-carbon urban planning, renewable energy, and institutional reform

KEY STAKEHOLDERS:

- Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Energy,
- UNEP, UN-Habitat
- Local governments - Buenos Aires, Mar del Plata, Mendoza, Salta, and Ushuaia

SIERRA LEONE

THEME: Solid waste management

KEY STAKEHOLDERS:

- Freetown City Council Planning, Waste, Water and Sanitation departments
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Private waste service providers
- NGOs and community organisations

RWANDA

THEMES: Climate resilience, biodiversity, and NDC integration

KEY STAKEHOLDERS:

- MINALOC (The Ministry of Local Government)
- REMA (Rwanda Environment Management Authority), FONERWA (Rwanda Green Fund)
- UNEP, UNDP
- Local governments - Kigali Rubavu, Muhanga, Huye, Musanze, Nyagatare, Rusizi

MOROCCO

THEMES: Circular economy, resource efficiency, and sustainable waste management

KEY STAKEHOLDERS:

- MTEDD – Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development
- AMEE – Moroccan Agency for Energy Efficiency, OCP Group (Office Chérifien des Phosphates Group)
- UNDP, UNEP
- Local governments - Marrakech, Rabat
- Civil society

CHINA

THEMES: Low-carbon development, urban biodiversity, and resilience

KEY STAKEHOLDERS:

- Ministry of Finance
- CCUD, World Bank
- Local governments - Chengdu, Chongqing, Ningbo, Wuhan, Guangzhou, Dalian
- Partners (UN-Habitat, City of Turku)

INDIA

THEMES: Sustainable infrastructure, innovation, and transit-oriented development (ToD)

KEY STAKEHOLDERS:

- Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)
- National Institute for Urban Affairs (NIUA), ADB
- UNEP, UNIDO
- Local governments - Pune, Chennai, Surat, Puducherry, Agra, Guntur, Bhopal

INDONESIA

THEMES: Climate finance, inclusive low-carbon development, and gender-responsive investment

KEY STAKEHOLDERS:

- Bappenas (Ministry of National Development Planning), Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Forestry, Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection, Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, Ministry of Home Affairs
- Indonesian Association of Urban and Regional Planners (IAP), Environmental Fund Management Agency (BPD LH), Indonesia Infrastructure Finance Company (PT Sarana Multi Infrastruktur), Association of Indonesian Municipalities (APEKSI), World Bank
- Local governments - Jakarta, Palembang, Bitung, Balikpapan, Semarang, Malang, Banyumas, Surabaya

CHINA

FIRST NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUE

Held virtually on 16 November 2022, the first dialogue launched the Green and Carbon Neutral Cities Project, the GEF-7 China Child Project, in Chengdu, Chongqing, and Ningbo. It brought together 36 participants from the World Bank, CCUD, Ministry of Finance and the project cities. The main topics discussed were:

- **Urban Biodiversity:** Experts emphasized that biodiversity underpins global economic development—half of world GDP depends on it. The dialogue highlighted planning tools, ecological zoning, and biodiversity finance, with Ningbo presenting early green financial products and bonds.
- **Low-Carbon Development:** China's dual-carbon policy was unpacked, stressing the urgency of integrating carbon goals into city planning. Academics from Renmin and Tianjin Universities explained how spatial planning, industrial transformation, and green construction could drive decarbonization.

Beyond technical insights, the dialogue highlighted the impact of multilevel governance processes. It laid the groundwork for regular communication and affirmed that low-carbon development is a core national priority, consistently echoed in city interventions. The roadmap captured this momentum, committing to continued exchanges, annual meetings, and a second dialogue to assess progress.

KEY THEMES



Low-carbon development



Urban biodiversity



Resilience



Following the first NLD, the roadmap structured how multilevel governance would evolve. It recommended annual discussions before the second NLD in Wuhan (2024), both national and local governments had tangible experiences and pilot actions to present. Low-carbon development remained central, as cities sought pathways to embed carbon peaking into their planning cycles, while biodiversity discussions matured into practical nature-based solutions (NbS).

SECOND NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUE: DEEPENING AND BROADENING (2024)

On 16–17 October 2024, the second dialogue convened in Wuhan, alongside the International High-Level Forum on Sustainable Urban Development hosted by China Center for Urban Development (CCUD). About 50 participants attended including participants from Wuhan, Guangzhou, and Dalian, as well as international partners like the City of Turku (virtually), UN-Habitat Mongolia, and Hong Kong Red Cross.

While the topics mirrored the first dialogue—low-carbon development and urban biodiversity—the framing expanded to include urban resilience. This reflected lessons from the 2022 drought in the Yangtze River Basin, which had exposed vulnerabilities in energy and ecological systems, underscoring the urgency of renewable diversification and resilient infrastructure.

INTEGRATED OUTCOMES AND INSIGHTS

When viewed together the two dialogues show a clear trajectory:

1. Low-Carbon Development as a National Priority

From the outset, low-carbon action dominated discussions, reflecting its prominence in the city level Five-Year Plan and NDCs. Both dialogues emphasized the financial and technical challenges of achieving decarbonization, especially in megacities. And by 2024, concrete progress was evident: reductions in coal use, adoption of renewable energy, and city-level carbon management frameworks.

2. Urban Biodiversity and NbS as Complementary Priorities

The 2022 dialogue introduced the concept and financing challenges. By 2024, cities like Ningbo and Wuhan demonstrated how biodiversity conservation could align with industrial planning, tourism, and ecological zoning. International cases reinforced its potential for resilience.

3. Multilevel Governance as the Connecting Tissue

The two China National-Local Dialogues, guided by the multilevel governance roadmap, illustrate a dynamic process of policy alignment, capacity-building, and knowledge sharing. They highlight how low-carbon development remains the cornerstone of Chinese urban priorities, with biodiversity and resilience as mutually reinforcing pillars. While financing and systemic transformation remain hurdles, the dialogues underscored China's resolve to align its urban development with its dual-carbon goals and ecological commitments.





FIRST NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUE

India's first UrbanShift National-Local Dialogue took place on 3 May 2023 in New Delhi, organized by ICLEI in collaboration with the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). The event gathered 144 participants representing national ministries, local governments from Surat, Pune, Chennai, Puducherry, and Agra, and implementing agencies.

It was focused on the theme “*An Indian Perspective on Sustainable and Smart Infrastructure Development*” — a reflection of India's ongoing national programs such as the Smart Cities Mission, Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), and the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), which together aim to enhance livability, resilience, and low-carbon growth across rapidly urbanizing regions.

Discussions focused on translating national policy ambitions into tangible local action and on developing mechanisms to overcome challenges such as fragmented governance, financing constraints, and limited local capacity. The need for integrated planning and innovative financing to cope with India's urban expansion was highlighted. MoHUA's Joint Secretary, Mr. Kunal Kumar, emphasized the scale of the investment challenge — estimating that USD 6 trillion will be required over the next 50 years to sustain urban growth. He urged local governments to leverage pilot projects and national policies to innovate at scale.

KEY THEMES



Sustainable infrastructure



Innovation



Transit-oriented development (ToD)



Local representatives shared diverse experiences:

- **Surat** presented its coastal resilience work, including sea wall construction and ecosystem restoration.
- **Pune** showcased transit-oriented development (ToD) and pedestrianization policies.
- **Chennai** detailed flood management through blue-green infrastructure and “sponge parks”.

SECOND NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUE

The second NLD, held on 9 October 2025 in New Delhi, took place within the ARISE Cities Forum. About 40 participants attended the discussions that built on the 2023 dialogue outcomes, moving from infrastructure planning toward innovation, inclusion, and integrated transit development. Dr. Debolina Kundu (NIUA) described how UrbanShift's capacity-building offer had enabled Indian cities to design tangible climate projects, digital observatories, and integrated data dashboards.

City representatives shared local examples:

- **Puducherry's** Mahe Municipality presented a participatory waste management model linking households, schools, and civic organizations, creating a circular, low-cost framework.
- **Bhopal** highlighted its electric bus transition and data-driven transport governance, integrating solar-powered charging stations.
- **Guntur** showcased its women-led electric waste collection initiative, blending gender empowerment with climate innovation.

Given India's rapid urbanization, ToD has become a critical strategy. **Pune** presented its on-going work on developing ToD policy, ToD impact assessment, local area planning framework including station area planning guidelines & the implementation process.

Experts stressed that ToD must go beyond transport corridors to encompass citywide planning, land value capture, and institutional coordination. Land-use challenges, the need for affordability in ToD areas and dedicated implementation cells for effective coordination were emphasized.

Participants also explored inclusive and gender-sensitive design. Women and vulnerable populations face disproportionate impacts. 52% of women in India have given up job opportunities due to safety concerns in public transport, underscoring the urgency of embedding safety and universal design in urban mobility planning.

INTEGRATED OUTCOMES AND INSIGHTS

1. Innovation driven sustainable transformation

Both dialogues trace a clear shift from infrastructure-focused planning to innovation-driven urban governance. The dialogues demonstrated that innovation in India is not limited to technology but includes institutional innovation — partnerships, data integration, and gender-responsive financing mechanisms.

2. Transit-Oriented Development and Low-Carbon Mobility

ToD emerged as a national priority reflecting the intersection of urban form, mobility, and climate goals. The dialogues linked ToD to India's broader decarbonization agenda, highlighting its potential to reduce emissions, congestion, and inequity. The Ministry of Finance's 2024 Union Budget further reinforced this by prioritizing ToD plans in 14 major Indian cities, including three UrbanShift cities — Pune, Chennai, and Surat.

3. Multilevel Governance as the Enabling Framework

The Indian NLD process exemplifies how effective MLG bridges policy intent and on-ground delivery. Through coordination among MoHUA, NIUA, and ICLEI, and with technical backing from UNEP, ADB, and other partners, the dialogues have delivered cross-sector collaboration.

4. Gender, Inclusion, and Capacity Building

Gender inclusion emerged as an important theme in the second national-local dialogue. Equitable governance is essential to sustainability yet gender balance among decision-makers remains constrained by structural inequities in representation — an issue that needs to be addressed through leadership pipelines and inclusive recruitment.

INDONESIA

FIRST NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUE

Held in Jakarta in August 2023, the first UrbanShift National–Local Dialogue officially launched Indonesia’s multilevel governance process, bringing together over 90 participants. These included Bappenas (Ministry of National Development Planning), the Ministries of Environment, Forestry and Finance, Energy and Mineral Resources, and Home Affairs, the World Bank, Indonesian Association of Urban and Regional Planners (IAP), and the five project cities: Jakarta, Semarang, Palembang, Balikpapan, and Bitung.

The dialogue focused on five core thematic areas that define Indonesia’s sustainable urban transition:

- Circular economy and waste management
- Water resource management
- Energy efficiency and renewable energy
- Sustainable transport
- Urban biodiversity and landscape

Discussions centered on integrating environmental considerations into spatial planning, promoting low-carbon development, and advancing biodiversity conservation within city planning frameworks. Participants identified local challenges, including institutional fragmentation, financing barriers, and limited coordination between central and municipal authorities.

KEY THEMES



Climate
finance



Inclusive
low-carbon
development



Gender-
responsive
investment



The dialogue concluded with commitments to enhance local technical capacity, pilot cross-sectoral interventions, and develop a Roadmap for Multilevel Governance to guide collaboration between national ministries, subnational governments, and financial institutions. It established a shared vision for sustainable, climate-resilient cities aligned with Indonesia’s Enhanced Nationally Determined Contribution (ENDC) targets and Long-Term Strategy for Low Carbon and Climate Resilience (LTS-LCCR 2050).

SECOND NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUE

Two years later, following the completion of all capacity-building activities, the second National–Local Dialogue was held in Jakarta on 1–2 October 2025, marking Indonesia’s transition from planning to financing and implementation. More than 60 stakeholders participated, including representatives from Bappenas, the World Bank, the Ministries of Finance, Environment, Women Empowerment and Child Protection, and Home Affairs, the Environmental Fund Management Agency (BPD LH), Indonesia Infrastructure Finance Company (PT Sarana Multi Infrastruktur), PT Penjaminan Infrastruktur Indonesia, the Association of Indonesian Municipalities (APEKSI), and the project cities.

The 2025 dialogue’s central focus was mobilizing climate finance to make city-level projects bankable, inclusive, and replicable. The agenda expanded from policy discussions to include practical pathways for investment, featuring sessions on:

- Climate financing instruments and fiscal incentives (Ministry of Finance);
- Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) in climate investment;
- Innovative subnational financing mechanisms, such as blended finance, green sukuk, and public–private partnerships;
- City-level investment showcases, highlighting Malang’s waste-to-energy project, Banyumas’s circular waste economy, and Surabaya’s sustainable mobility initiatives.

The dialogue also featured a half-day workshop on mainstreaming GEDSI in city action planning, ensuring climate projects deliver equitable social benefits. Speakers emphasized the need for inclusive design, gender-responsive climate finance, and local-level policy coherence to ensure long-term sustainability.



INTEGRATED OUTCOMES AND INSIGHTS

1. Climate Finance as the Core Enabler

Both dialogues converged on the need to bridge planning with financing. By 2025, the emphasis had shifted from vision to execution — ensuring that pilot cities could design, fund, and implement transformative projects. The Ministry of Finance and Bappenas introduced new mechanisms for green bonds, blended finance, and regional PPPs, while institutions such as BPD LH and PT SMI provided technical assistance for project preparation.

2. Inclusive and Gender-Responsive Urban Development

The introduction of GEDSI mainstreaming in 2025 positioned Indonesia among the regional frontrunners in inclusive climate finance. The dialogues underscored that gender-sensitive investment enhances project effectiveness and social equity, linking gender and climate agendas under Indonesia’s Golden Indonesia 2045 vision.

3. Multilevel Governance as the Connecting Tissue

The evolution from the 2023 to 2025 dialogues demonstrates Indonesia’s growing capacity for integrated national–local collaboration. National ministries provided the policy frameworks and financing instruments, while cities contributed context-specific innovations and local partnerships. Together, they advanced a systemic approach where urban resilience, biodiversity, and circular economy converge within Indonesia’s broader decarbonization and development strategies.

MOROCCO

FIRST NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUE

Held on 20 June 2025 in Rabat, the first dialogue in Morocco was convened in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development (MTEDD). The event coincided with the national conference on the circular economy and gathered over 100 participants representing national ministries, regional and municipal authorities, civil society, industry, academia and international partners. The Dialogue sought to strengthen legal, strategic and institutional frameworks for advancing a circular economy, align national strategy with local implementation, and mobilise multi-actor collaboration across governance levels.

The opening address by Minister Leila Benali from the Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development framed circular transition as both an environmental imperative and economic opportunity — moving beyond talk to action.

KEY THEMES



Circular economy



Resource efficiency



Sustainable waste management



Three thematic working groups explored waste, water, and energy & resources:

- **Waste:** Plans emerged to formalise informal recyclers, strengthen Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and improve source-segregation of waste.
- **Water:** Discussions covered reuse of treated wastewater, decentralised water treatment systems and tariff reforms to incentivise efficiency.
- **Energy & Resources:** Participants considered waste-to-energy, biomass, alternative fuels, circular supply-chains and product design for longevity.

Global best practice input from UNEP and the EU Delegation emphasised alignment with global circular economy trajectories, strong regulatory frameworks, monitoring systems and innovation pilots. Local voices stressed that though frameworks exist, the key challenge is scaling implementation, improving inter-ministerial coordination, aligning local and national action, and strengthening data & capacity systems. A notable outcome was a commitment to provide recommendations to the upcoming National Circular Economy Roadmap, under development by MTEDD.

SECOND NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUE

The second dialogue held on 23 October 2025 in Rabat built on the first by shifting from strategy to localisation and operationalisation. A broader set of municipalities and regions participated, focusing on how to embed circular economy principles into territorial governance and local planning processes. Key outcomes included:

- **A shared visioning exercise** for the “circular city of the future” produced a set of local levers: embedding circular objectives in municipal development plans; municipal regulation and procurement aligned to circularity; citizen engagement; circular urban planning; financial incentives for circular enterprises. These emerged directly from the thematic workshops of the first dialogue.
- **Implementation acceleration:** Local governments committed to institutional reforms and pilot actions that reflect the waste, water and energy interventions identified earlier — e.g., formalising informal recyclers, decentralised water reuse, waste-to-energy within regional value chains.
- **Multilevel mobilisation:** National and local actors reaffirmed the need for stronger coordination mechanisms, and for the circular economy agenda to integrate into regional development strategies, finance mobilisation and regulatory frameworks.
- **Private sector engagement:** Industry representatives underlined that circular business models are increasingly tied to competitiveness, and called for bold, sustained investment.
- **Inclusion of informal actors:** Working groups flagged the importance of integrating informal recyclers into formal value-chains, improving traceability, logistics and enabling entry of smaller actors into circular supply-chains.
- **Future planning:** The updated roadmap (2025-2027) was adopted, specifying formal institutional arrangements and establishing indicators for monitoring implementation.

INTEGRATED OUTCOMES AND INSIGHTS

1. Catalyst for multilevel governance
Morocco's dialogue process underscores how a circular economy can act as an entry-point for MLG – aligning national strategy with local implementation across governance layers.

2. Local leadership and action orientation

Momentum generated at the local level — municipalities, informal actors, and industry are no longer passive recipients but active shapers of strategy.

3. From vision to levers

The progression from thematic workshops to tangible levers (waste, water, energy) demonstrates a journey from high-level dialogue to locally actionable change-agents.

4. Private sector & informal economy integration

The inclusion of industry and informal recyclers in planning processes marks a shift from top-down policy to inclusive circular value-chain transformation.

5. Institutionalisation of Roadmap

The process reflects a deliberate move to embed dialogue insights into formal governance instruments such as the National Circular Economy Roadmap to ensure continuity and implementation.

6. Data, capacity and scale challenges remain

While significant momentum is being built, challenges persist around scaling pilots, building municipal capacity, securing finance, coordinating multi-ministerial action and aligning local-national data and monitoring systems.

RWANDA

FIRST NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUE

Held in Kigali on 22–23 June 2023, the first dialogue launched Rwanda’s multilevel governance process under the UrbanShift programme. About 64 participants attended, including representatives from national ministries, the City of Kigali, six secondary cities (Rubavu, Muhanga, Huye, Musanze, Nyagatare, Rusizi), and flood-affected districts Karongi and Rutsiro.

The main topics discussed were:

- **Flood Resilience:** Cities shared experiences of recurring flood damage, emphasizing the need for “new-age infrastructure” such as stormwater management systems, ecosystem restoration, and ecological corridors.
- **Biodiversity Enhancement:** Discussions highlighted the importance of protecting urban and peri-urban ecosystems. Participants explored how ecological planning and nature-based solutions (NbS) could enhance resilience and safeguard biodiversity in rapidly growing cities.
- **Multilevel Governance and Policy Alignment:** Cities emphasized the need for stronger coordination across government levels and urban stakeholders to overcome policy gaps and institutional barriers, and to align around a shared vision for sustainable infrastructure and urban development.

KEY THEMES



Climate
resilience



Biodiversity



NDC
integration



The dialogue helped review Rwanda’s governance environment, identify gaps in policy coherence, and co-define a shared vision for flood-resilient and biodiversity-sensitive urban infrastructure. The roadmap captured this momentum, recommending biannual meetings in 2024 and a second dialogue in 2025 to assess progress.

SECOND NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUE

While the first dialogue focused on infrastructure resilience and biodiversity, the second centered on integrating local government priorities into the national climate strategy. On 11–12 March 2025, the second dialogue was held in Kigali as a high-level local government consultative workshop on Rwanda’s third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0). Over 70 participants attended, including local governments from across the country, REMA (Rwanda Environment Management Authority), MINALOC (The Ministry of Local Government), FONERWA (Rwanda Green Fund), and international partners and experts.

Local governments proposed concrete interventions such as riverbank protection, agroforestry, clean cooking, renewable energy incentives, stormwater management, and climate-resilient agriculture. Lessons on finance, spatial planning, and community empowerment were highlighted.

Local governments also emphasized the need for balanced adaptation and mitigation, stronger monitoring, reporting and review (MRV) systems, alignment with district strategies, and active private sector involvement. Capacity building and private sector involvement were highlighted as essential for implementation. Key next steps highlighted included raising awareness of NDC3.0, assessing local capacity gaps, supporting flagship climate projects, enabling policy reforms, and improving local climate data systems.



INTEGRATED OUTCOMES AND INSIGHTS

Rwanda’s dialogues demonstrate how infrastructure resilience, biodiversity, and local government empowerment can converge to shape national commitments. They also underline that citizen-centered implementation and sustainable financing remain critical challenges for the years ahead.

1. Resilience and biodiversity as entry points

The 2023 dialogue introduced how Nature-Based Solutions and sustainable infrastructure could address flooding and biodiversity loss. By 2025, these priorities had been mainstreamed into national climate planning through district-level contributions.

2. Local governments at the core of NDC implementation

The second dialogue confirmed that local priorities were reflected in the NDC 3.0 draft. This alignment strengthened ownership, while also exposing the need for capacity building, finance access, and clearer role definitions for districts.

3. Coordinating multilevel governance to go from local to global

Together, the dialogues highlighted that Rwanda’s climate ambition depends on coordination between national strategies and local realities, and reinforced the role of local governments in shaping national climate commitments. Alignment with the global CHAMP initiative further strengthened Rwanda’s global climate leadership and ensured national commitment and international legitimacy.

SIERRA LEONE

KEY THEME



Solid waste management

The Freetown UrbanShift Workshop on Planning, Informality, and Waste Management (14–15 May 2025) marked Sierra Leone's first multilevel engagement under the GEF-7 Resilient Urban Sierra Leone Project (RUSLP).

Organized in collaboration with Freetown City Council (FCC), the workshop brought together about 47 participants, including FCC departments (planning, waste, sanitation, public health), Councilor Mohamed Dabor from FCC, national ministries, the Environment Protection Agency (EPA), the Western Region, NGOs, community groups, and partners such as UN-Habitat.

The event introduced practical tools to strengthen urban planning and waste management, especially in informal settlements, and to promote behaviour change toward cleaner, climate-resilient cities. The workshop and the recommendations that followed it 6 months later form the foundation of future UrbanShift engagement on waste management.

WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS

Urban Planning and Waste Nexus

Participants examined the interdependence between urban planning, informality, and waste systems.

- Poor spatial planning in response to rapid urbanisation was identified as a key factor in inadequate waste collection, particularly in unplanned coastal and hillside settlements where 35 percent of Freetown's residents live.
- The dialogue reframed informal waste workers as essential actors in the system rather than obstacles, advocating for their formal recognition, training, and incentive structures.

Community Behaviour and Public Awareness

The Behaviour Change Wheel (BCW) and its COM-B model (Capability–Opportunity–Motivation → Behaviour) were introduced to analyse why negative waste behaviours, such as open dumping and waste burning, persist. Participants identified the root causes of these behaviours, and co-created solutions for local behaviour-change interventions coupled with supportive policies - for example, integrating community education into FCC's existing waste plan.

Planning for Informality

Experts linked waste management to the Western Area Structure Plan and Freetown Structure Plan, urging that solid-waste infrastructure and sanitation

be treated as urban land-use priorities. Reforms discussed included decentralised waste transfer stations, safe landfill upgrades, and embedding waste zones in zoning schemes.

Operation “Dorti Mus Go”

Operation “*Dorti Mus Go*” (in Krio, meaning “The Dirt Must Go”) is Freetown City Council's flagship waste management and sanitation campaign, to tackle the city's chronic waste and environmental health challenges.

Regional Learning

Examples from Tanzania's Nipe Fagio and Kenya's Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) illustrated how low-tech, decentralised, community-driven solutions can build circular waste economies adaptable to Freetown's context.

FIELD VISIT AND TECHNICAL LESSONS

A visit to King Tom Waste Transfer Station showcased an innovative fecal sludge facility, processing waste from non-sewered sanitation systems which are prevalent across Freetown. Participants also visited Cackle Bay settlement, exposing the challenges of managing waste and sanitation in flood-prone coastal zones, alongside the upgrading solutions which are being implemented there.

Key insights included:

- Treat waste management as a core public service and utility;
- Adopt affordable modular recycling infrastructure;
- Leverage public–private partnerships and circular-economy models (e.g., waste-to-briquettes);
- Use GIS mapping to locate service gaps and plan new transfer points;
- Begin exploring digital monitoring tools for efficiency tracking.



FOCUS AREAS AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Behaviour Change

Institutionalize the BCW/COM-B framework within FCC's sanitation strategy to better understand why behaviours are persisting and implement more targeted solutions; launch multilingual education and awareness campaigns; embed environmental topics in school curricula.

2. Integration of Informal Actors

Map informal waste collectors; organize cooperatives through licensing, training, and micro-credit; create small-enterprise support programmes.

3. Policy & Enforcement

Align Zero Waste Plan and sanitation by-laws with national legislation; establish community enforcement committees.

4. Infrastructure & Finance

Prioritize engineered landfills and transfer points in the updated Freetown Structure Plan; develop low-cost MRFs; seek climate and development finance via RUSLP.

5. Data & Monitoring

Introduce GIS-based mapping and digital tracking for collection, compliance, and revenue flows.

6. Multilevel Collaboration

Form an Urban Waste Management Forum linking ministries, FCC, EPA, NGOs, and private operators.

ARGENTINA

FIRST NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUE

Held in person on 13 December 2022, the first dialogue gathered 33 participants from Argentina's Ministry of Environment, other national ministries, financial institutions, academia, and the five pilot cities (Buenos Aires, Mar del Plata, Mendoza, Salta, and Ushuaia). The main topics discussed were:

- **Integrated Urban Planning:** Cities highlighted challenges of poverty, inequality, and climate impacts such as floods, heatwaves, and glacier retreat. Good practices from global cases like Tokyo and Paris informed discussions on sustainable land use and mobility.
- **Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency:** Participants explored opportunities for scaling up clean energy, energy-efficient housing, and industrial transitions. The dialogue stressed the need to align these efforts with Argentina's updated NDC target of 349 MtCO₂e by 2030.

KEY THEMES



Low-carbon
urban planning



Renewable
energy



Institutional
reform



The dialogue created a baseline self-diagnosis of local capacities, exposed disparities in financing and legal frameworks, and generated a roadmap for coordination. The roadmap called for regular communication, pilot projects, and a second dialogue to assess progress.

SECOND NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUE

On 21 July 2025, the second dialogue was convened as a hybrid event alongside the project Steering Committee meeting. Thirty-eight participants attended, including the pilot cities, national institutions and development banks.

While the first dialogue focused on vision and capacity-building, the second confronted institutional and financial bottlenecks. Progress was concentrated in consultancies and planning platforms, while pilot investments and financing mechanisms lagged severely.

Cities nevertheless showcased readiness:

- **Salta** advanced a Green Corridor agreement.
- **Ushuaia** worked on bioclimatic buildings and cycling infrastructure.
- **Buenos Aires** prepared a Green Corridor Plan in Lago Lugano.
- **Mar del Plata** signed agreements for tourism mobility and agroecological production pilots.
- **Mendoza** advanced sustainable hubs and “superblock” planning.

The dialogue resulted in a proposed restructuring of responsibilities, a revised work plan through 2028, and a call for stronger support to unlock financing.



INTEGRATED OUTCOMES AND INSIGHTS

Argentina's dialogues illustrate how institutional frameworks influence climate action: recent presidential transitions (three presidential transitions since 2022) and financial constraints have shaped the pace of implementation. At the same time, they highlight the strong commitment of cities to advance low-carbon development within evolving national contexts:

1. Low-Carbon Development as Priority

From the outset, renewable energy and efficiency dominated discussions. By 2025, cities had prepared pilots, but systemic financing and national approvals remained bottlenecks.

2. Cities as Drivers Amid National Uncertainty

Despite institutional transitions and slow disbursement, local governments demonstrated resilience and ownership of the UrbanShift agenda.

3. Multilevel Governance as the Connecting Tissue

The two dialogues illustrate both the potential and fragility of multilevel governance. While the first dialogue mapped opportunities, the second revealed how political instability and coordination failures can derail progress. Yet, the restructuring plan and city-level readiness provide a foundation for renewed momentum through 2028.

BRAZIL

FIRST NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUE

The first Brazil National–Local Dialogue (NLD) was held on 20 November 2023 in Florianópolis, Santa Catarina. Organized by ICLEI in collaboration with the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MCTI) and the CITinova II Project, it was hosted by the State Civil Defense of Santa Catarina and supported by the Ministries of Cities (MCid) and Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MMA).

The Dialogue gathered about 30 participants—from the metropolitan regions of Belém, Florianópolis, and the Teresina–Timon urban agglomeration—alongside national ministries, civil society, academia, and international organizations. The discussion was focused on ‘Ways to Boost Integrated Urban Planning and Multilevel Governance.’

Implemented under the GEF-7 CITinova II Project, UrbanShift Brazil seeks to strengthen integrated metropolitan management and promote low-carbon, resilient urban development. Brazil’s metropolitan regions are responsible for a large population and share of greenhouse-gas emissions but face institutional fragmentation and limited coordination mechanisms. The NLD’s goal was to promote strategic reflection and peer exchange on how metropolitan governance could accelerate sustainable urban transformation.

Participants identified major governance challenges rooted in Brazil’s federal structure. It was underscored how the principle of municipal autonomy often conflicts with state and federal competencies, producing fragmented systems:

KEY THEMES



Metropolitan governance



Resilience



Integrated urban planning



while 81 metropolitan regions are formally recognized, only 15 are considered functionally coherent by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE).

Working groups from the three metropolitan regions produced targeted action points:

- **Belém:** Develop a metropolitan plan covering land use, mobility, sanitation, and sustainable tourism, with a proposed metropolitan tourism fund.
- **Florianópolis:** Prioritize integrated mobility and explore self-management governance mechanisms that reduce reliance on federal oversight.
- **Teresina–Timon:** Create a bi-state consortium supported by the federal government to coordinate shared infrastructure, river management, and capacity-building.

SECOND NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUE

Held on 10–11 June 2025 in Teresina, the Second Brazil National–Local Dialogue expanded upon the first by focusing on “Metropolitan and Interfederative Governance Event: Piloting Solutions for the Three Brazilian Regions”. It convened more than 60 participants from federal ministries, subnational governments, academia, and civil society.

1. MCTI’s key achievements included establishing inter-institutional working groups within the CITinova II Project and advancing pilot actions in Belém, Florianópolis, and Teresina–Timon.

2. Discussions centered on incorporating climate resilience into metropolitan planning and accessing finance from international funds (e.g. Global Environment Facility and National Bank for Economic and Social Development). The Ministry of Cities also announced work on a National Policy for Metropolitan Development and Resilience (NPMDR) to align national and local efforts.

3. Discussions addressed gender balance and representation. Although 46% of participants in 2023 were women, structural inequalities persist, and in the future gender targets and leadership training should be provided.

4. Spanish and Colombian representatives presented lessons from Guadalajara and Medellín on integrated metropolitan institutions and participatory councils, informing Brazil’s future models.

5. Next Steps for CITinova II Implementation: a revised Roadmap (2025–2027) was discussed, prioritizing:

- Formalization of inter-state metropolitan consortia;
- Design of a National Metropolitan Governance Observatory;
- Development of a Metropolitan Investment Fund for low-carbon infrastructure.

INTEGRATED OUTCOMES AND INSIGHTS

1. Metropolitan governance as Brazil’s MLG entry point

Brazil’s experience shows that metropolitan regions are the natural laboratory for multilevel governance. The dialogues bridged the fragmented federal system and provided a platform for cooperation among ministries, states, and municipalities.

2. Roadmaps drive continuity and implementation

By linking dialogue outcomes to CITinova II actions, the roadmap can transform discussion into policy coordination. Each metropolitan region now has a defined agenda with federal and local responsibilities.

3. Climate and sustainability mainstreamed in urban planning

The integration of climate adaptation, bioeconomy, and sustainable mobility into metropolitan planning reflects a paradigm shift from sectoral projects to systemic urban transformation.

4. Inclusion and capacity building as enablers

The dialogues promoted a culture of knowledge exchange and peer learning through CITinova’s working groups and international alliances.

5. Institutionalization for long-term impact

Both dialogues highlighted that continuity depends on embedding metropolitan governance in formal policy structures — through statutory frameworks, funding mechanisms, and national coordination bodies that survive political cycles.



COSTA RICA

FIRST NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUE

The first NLD took place on 15–16 February 2023, convening more than 100 participants from ministries, autonomous institutions, universities, municipalities, NGOs, and international organizations to discuss Peri-Urban Agro-Landscapes and the Green Economy, reflecting concerns over unsustainable land use in rapidly urbanizing areas. The dialogue linked these land pressures to broader goals of decarbonization and the green economy transition.

Some key outcomes from the discussion:

- Both national and local governments recognized unsustainable peri-urban growth as a threat to resilience.
- Substituting fossil fuels with renewable energy derived from agricultural waste was seen as a pathway to align land use with the National Decarbonization Plan.
- Participants stressed the need to find diverse financing sources for peri-urban land sustainability.

KEY THEMES



Nature-based solutions



Water management



Peri-urban resilience



SECOND NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUE

By 2025, the agenda had shifted from land-use planning to the urgent issue of urban flooding, reflecting Costa Rica's rising vulnerability due to urban expansion and weak territorial planning. The second NLD took place in person on 18–19 March 2025 in Barva bringing together local governments, national agencies, international experts, academics, private sector actors, and community leaders to discuss flood risk in Costa Rica.

Key outcomes of the dialogue include:

- Field tours in Santa Bárbara and Belén illustrated practical projects in riparian restoration, drainage, and wetlands rehabilitation. Later visits to San Rafael and Tibás showcased reforestation, rain gardens, porous pavements, and integrated urban design for resilience.

- Participants collaboratively developed proposals for a new law on rainwater management and blue-green infrastructure, including tax incentives, mandatory green infrastructure in new developments, and community-based schemes.
- Inter-institutional and multilevel coordination was a crucial part of the discussion.
- Integrating technology such as the MOCUPP-Urbano Tool, a GIS system for real time monitoring of flood risks, into decision making was highlighted.
- Financing strategies such as stormwater service fees and pooled municipal projects were explored and strong emphasis was placed on citizen participation as essential for sustaining interventions.
- The closing session called for the creation of a permanent multisectoral committee to coordinate governance, pursue financing, and monitor progress.



INTEGRATED INSIGHTS AND CONTINUITY

When viewed together, the two dialogues illustrate Costa Rica's evolving priorities and the value of the roadmap's role in guiding them:

1. Shifting Themes, Consistent Goals

The first dialogue focused on peri-urban land and decarbonization, while the second addressed the acute challenge of floods. Both, however, aligned with Costa Rica's broader green economy and resilience agenda, linking land, energy, and water.

2. Multilevel Governance in Practice

The Second National-Local Dialogue resulted in a roadmap for implementation of a draft law outlining response measures to urban flooding, specifically addressing stormwater management and soil erosion, which would not have been possible without inter-institutional and multilevel governance coordination.

3. Integration of NbS and Technology

Both dialogues emphasized nature-based solutions: first for peri-urban agriculture, later for water management. The second dialogue added digital innovation through MOCUPP-Urbano, showing how data-driven tools complement nature-based solutions.

4. Financing as a Persistent Challenge

Both dialogues highlighted the financing gap. In 2023, it centered on peri-urban investments; in 2025, on resilient infrastructure and stormwater services. Innovative models like PPPs, municipal fees, and ecosystem services were suggested.

URBAN
SH/FT

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE
FOR INTEGRATED
URBAN PLANNING

Reflections and Conclusions

3



CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A NEW ERA OF MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

UrbanShift's experience across nine countries confirms that effective multilevel governance is the backbone of successful urban climate action.

When designed well, it:

- turns national climate ambition into implementable local actions,
- connects policies with finance, and
- creates accountable partnerships between national and local actors.

When neglected, national targets remain aspirational and city priorities remain isolated.

Building on the NLDs and Roadmaps, several recurring challenges emerged:

1. Institutional fragmentation and policy silos

Overlapping mandates and unclear division of responsibilities between ministries and levels of government lead to duplicated efforts or gaps.

2. Limited and access to finance

Many cities lack the fiscal powers, credit-worthiness, or support needed to prepare and finance climate projects, increasing dependence on central budgets and complex procedures.

3. Impacts of crises such as COVID-19

The pandemic delayed meetings and diverted political attention, slowing approvals and the establishment of new coordination mechanisms.

4. Political turnover and fragile continuity

Frequent changes in leadership can stall or reverse progress when MLG processes are not anchored in institutions and legal frameworks.

5. Capacity constraints

Both national and local governments often lack the technical, administrative, or data capacities needed for integrated planning, monitoring, and reporting.

6. Inclusion and representation gaps

Women, youth, and marginalized groups remain under-represented in decision-making, even where participation is encouraged.

7. Coordination among implementing partners

Multi-agency projects add another layer of complexity. Without clear roles and shared reporting, timelines for NLDs and child-project activities can drift apart.

GOOD PRACTICES FOR FUTURE NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUES

1. EMBED MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE IN FORMAL NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

Making NLDs and Roadmaps part of existing national processes reduces the risk that they are seen as one-off, project-driven events. When they are tied to established policy cycles, officials have a clear reason to participate and follow through.

- Link NLDs and Roadmaps to existing national processes such as NDC updates, national urban policies, or sector strategies, so that they directly inform core government work rather than sitting alongside it.
- Seek formal recognition (for example through ministerial decisions or references in laws and strategies) so that coordination structures survive project cycles and staff changes.



2. TREAT ROADMAPS AS LIVING IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

Roadmaps are most useful when they guide day-to-day decisions rather than sit on a shelf. Regular updates create habits of coordination and send a signal that progress will be tracked.

- Keep Roadmaps concise, with clear actions, responsible institutions, and timelines that officials can realistically use as a reference in their own planning.
- Review them annually in an NLD or similar forum and adjust based on progress and new priorities, so the document reflects real implementation rather than the project's original design.



3. CONNECT NATIONAL AMBITIONS TO LOCAL PROJECTS AND FINANCE

National climate goals only become credible when they are backed by concrete projects and investment pathways. Using NLDs to bridge this gap improves both policy coherence and the chances of mobilizing finance.

- Use NLDs to identify a small number of priority city projects that clearly support national targets, such as NDCs or long-term strategies, so national and local actors can rally around visible examples.
- Involve finance ministries, national development banks, and other finance institutions early in the conversation to clarify eligibility criteria, suitable instruments, and technical assistance needs before projects are designed.

4. ADAPT TO NATIONAL GOVERNANCE CONTEXTS

There is no single model of multilevel governance. Aligning NLDs with the country's existing institutions and political culture makes it more likely that new coordination practices will be accepted and sustained.

- In more centralized systems, focus NLDs on clarifying national mandates, standards, and financial transfers that enable local action, and on improving communication from central ministries to subnational governments.
- In more decentralized systems, invest in bottom-up co-creation and platforms where cities can propose priorities and shape national agendas, building on existing local government associations or networks where possible.

5. BUILD INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY AND LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIPS

Governance improvements take longer than any single project. Creating stable structures and relationships helps keep progress going when projects close and political leadership changes.

- Establish permanent or semi-permanent coordination units or committees under lead ministries, with clear secretariat functions, so there is always an identified "home" for MLG and NLD activities.
- Anchor these units in domestic institutions and budgets so that learning, contacts, and tools developed under initiatives such as UrbanShift remain available and can be strengthened over time.

6. DESIGN FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION AND GENDER EQUALITY

Inclusive processes lead to more legitimate decisions and better outcomes, especially for communities most affected by climate risks. Treating inclusion as a design choice, not an afterthought, improves the quality and fairness of policies and projects.

- Set participation targets and create spaces where women, youth, informal settlement residents, and other marginalized groups can participate meaningfully, for example through dedicated sessions or roundtables.
- Integrate gender and social inclusion into budgeting, project design, and monitoring, building on examples such as Indonesia's GEDSI-focused NLD to show how inclusive governance can strengthen climate finance and project quality.



7. MONITOR, LEARN, AND ADAPT

Multilevel governance is a learning process. Simple monitoring systems and regular reflection help governments understand what is working and where adjustments are needed, especially under changing political or economic conditions.

- Build simple monitoring frameworks around Roadmap actions, focusing on a small number of indicators that ministries and cities can realistically report on.
- Use results and lessons from implementation to update policies and future NLD agendas, and plan for contingencies such as virtual or hybrid formats so coordination can continue during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.



8. MEASURE AND COMMUNICATE SUCCESS

Visible successes build political support and motivate partners to stay engaged. Regular communication also helps funders and citizens understand how multilevel governance contributes to tangible climate and development benefits.

- Regularly document and share outcomes such as policy reforms, pilot projects, new coordination bodies, and financing commitments, even through short internal notes or briefings to senior officials.
- Celebrate progress through public events, media, or knowledge products, to maintain momentum, recognize contributions from different institutions, and strengthen the case for continued investment in multilevel governance.

NLD QUICK START CHECKLIST



- ☐ designate a national focal point for MLG and NLDs,
- ☐ map key stakeholders and existing coordination mechanisms, and
- ☐ agree on a first set of achievable actions to build trust and demonstrate early results.

NATIONAL-LOCAL DIALOGUES AT THE HEART OF URBANSHIFT

UrbanShift was created to help cities adopt integrated approaches to urban development and build an equitable, zero-carbon future where people and planet can thrive. Through its Global Platform, it brings together global, national, and local champions around a shared vision of sustainable, integrated development and provides a common structure for the different “Child Projects” working in more than 23 cities across Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Within this architecture, National–Local Dialogues and Multilevel Governance Roadmaps are the thread that ties the initiative together. UrbanShift offers a suite of activities such as city academies, finance academies, city-business hubs, geospatial analysis, labs, forums, and webinars, all designed to build skills and generate solutions. The Dialogues are where these strands meet: they create the institutional and political space for national ministries, cities, financiers, and other actors to bring insights from these activities together, test them against real policy and budget processes, and translate them into shared commitments and practical Roadmaps.

In practice, this means that a geospatial assessment or a finance academy does not stand alone. Its findings feed into an NLD, where ministries and cities discuss how to adapt national policies, align regulations, and prepare pipelines of projects that can access finance. The resulting Multilevel Governance Roadmaps then guide follow-up actions on the ground, keeping momentum between events and ensuring that what is learned in one space becomes a basis for coordinated implementation in others. This is how the Global Platform helps build momentum, raise ambitions, secure commitments, and

implement integrated solutions on the ground, and how NLDs turn that promise into a repeatable process at country level.

The country experiences documented in this report show this dynamic in action. In Brazil, National–Local Dialogues supported a renewed focus on climate federalism and a roadmap for coordination across the union, states, and municipalities. In China and Rwanda, they helped localize national dual-carbon and NDC goals by integrating biodiversity, nature-based solutions, and resilience into city planning. In Indonesia, they linked gender-responsive climate finance discussions with concrete steps to make projects bankable. Across countries, the same pattern appears: when Dialogues are intentional, inclusive, and backed by Roadmaps, they connect national ambition, local innovation, and available finance in a way that accelerates change on the ground.

For the Global Environment Facility and other funders, this offers a clear value proposition. Investing in NLDs and Roadmaps is a relatively low-cost way to strengthen enabling environments and give coherence to diverse project portfolios. It provides a practical mechanism to link global agendas to national frameworks and local investments, so that capacity-building activities and technical tools feed directly into policy reforms, project pipelines, and measurable climate and biodiversity outcomes. In doing so, it reduces risk, increases ownership, and makes larger infrastructure and resilience investments more likely to succeed.

Looking ahead, there is a strong case to scale and institutionalize this model. Future GEF projects and partner programmes can:

- support the continuation and scaling of NLDs and Roadmaps in UrbanShift countries,
- apply the model in new countries and regions, adapting it to local contexts, and
- link governance support more systematically with investment windows, so that cities with strong Roadmaps can access finance more quickly.

ICLEI and its UrbanShift partners are well placed to support this next phase, drawing on decades of experience in connecting international agreements with local action and on the tested methods developed through UrbanShift

UrbanShift has shown that when National–Local Dialogues sit at the center of an integrated package of support, they become more than a meeting format. They become a durable way of working that binds together knowledge, capacity, finance, and political will. Building on this foundation, governments and partners can turn multilevel governance from a project output into a lasting driver of sustainable, inclusive urban development.





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