



Organization of  
American States

## **2013 UPDATE: OAS WORK ON SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES IN THE AMERICAS**

Sustainable Cities Initiatives in the Americas Hemisphere webpage:  
<http://www.oas.org/dsd/SustainableCities.htm>

---

**Background:** The cities of the Americas are experiencing dramatic and accelerating changes. Rapid urbanization poses serious challenges in terms of infrastructure and housing, common spaces and sustainable transportation, the prevention and correction of pollution, the disposal of industrial and electronic waste, the promotion of pollution free consumption habits, and the management of sustainable technologies. The accelerated pace of urbanization is creating new forms of social and economic marginality that nurture crime and violence at epidemic levels. Cities often expand beyond their planned limits, and official and informal systems to provide water, sewerage, waste disposal, and other common services to these areas tend to be insufficient and inefficient. Furthermore, cities are responsible for as much as 80 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions while at the same time city residents face significant impacts from climate change.

According to recent studies, Latin America and the Caribbean has the highest rate of urbanization in the developing world. The proportion of the region's population living in cities doubled from 41% to 80% in the last 60 years. Likewise, economic activity in the region is significantly concentrated in its urban areas. However, two out of every three people in Latin American and Caribbean cities live in poverty.

In this context, all OAS Member States have spearheaded efforts to face the challenges associated with rapid urbanization. Medellín, Colombia is becoming famous for innovative sustainable transport. In order to help transform the city, recent efforts to modernize public transit have created better public spaces and improved safety. These projects include the development of bus rapid transit (called MetroPlús) and the creation of a bike-share program -- new transportation elements that are integrated with existing metro and cable car systems. In addition, the city is building 1.6 million square meters of new public space. Medellín was awarded the 2012 Sustainable Transport Award. Medellín's social transformation through sustainable initiatives is

certainly one to be applauded, however innovative disruption based on sustainability principles is fortunately not unique to Colombia. Inner-City Bus Rapid Transit is spreading throughout.

Mexico City's pioneer mobility project, Metrobus Line 4, utilizes all of the components of a successful bus rapid transit (bRT) system: dedicated lanes, enclosed stations with leveled access and prepayment, large buses with multiple doors, advanced fare collection, and a sleek image. Inaugurated in April 2012, Metrobus Line 4 runs through Mexico City's historical downtown, with an extension to the international airport. Line 4 was carefully designed to preserve the colonial architecture of the historical city center.

In Honduras and Nicaragua, incentives have been set in place to promote the involvement of local communities and governments in the joint planning of projects of construction and maintenance of urban infrastructure. Barbados, Belize, and Trinidad Tobago, all Small Island Developing States (SIDS), recognize the dangers of global warming and the importance of reducing the country's carbon footprint. Green Barbados, a target goal of the 2007 - 2025 National Strategic Plan, seeks to transform the country into a cleaner, more environmentally advanced country. In Belize City, advances in a Waterfront Development Strategy and Fort Point Pedestrian Walk are underway, and T&T has initiated The Green Fund, established to financially assist registered community groups in activities related to the remediation – remedying environmental damage, reforestation – replanting with trees and conservation of the environment – preservation of the natural environment and wildlife. Furthermore, Mexico City launched its first public bike share program, Ecobici, a system that features 1,114 bikes and 85 stations as part of the new Bicycle Mobility Strategy.

The private sector is also collaborating with like-minded innovators in all aspects of the value-chain by utilizing, for example, the B Corp certification for sustainable business ([www.bcorporation.net](http://www.bcorporation.net)). B Corps are certified by the nonprofit B Lab to meet rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency. Today, there is a growing community of more than 600 Certified B Corps from 15 countries and 60 industries working together toward 1 unifying goal: to redefine success in business. For example, in Chile, TriCiclos is a company that offers Puntos Limpios (clean points) for citizens and companies to learn to recycle and become conscious consumers, acting to solve the problems of waste management. Working where there are no existing solutions, Triciclos recycles some 20 materials, most of which have very low commercial value, promising that every material received is effectively recycled. TriCiclos supports companies, schools, and other organizations that want to learn how to act in a more sustainable way, and sells products with low environmental impact to support sustainable habits. In 2012, TriCiclos recycled 731 metric tons of waste headed for landfills last year; 100% of products support the reduction of overall waste sent to landfills. Case studies such as these will be disseminated and scaled up where possible.

**OAS Mandates and follow up:** Recognizing the need to implement actions to build and promote the creation of sustainable cities in the hemisphere, since the Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development, held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, December 7-8, 1996 [The Plan of Action](#) refers to four areas under this subject: economic development (initiatives 32 to 35), housing (initiatives 36 to 40), pollution prevention and environmental protection (initiatives 38 to 45), and sustainable transport (initiatives 43 and 46).

The United States is supporting this OAS sustainable communities effort in 2 phases (phase 1 began in 2011 and phase 2 is just getting underway). Urban areas are centers for job creation, making them the front line of a green economy. This includes: deploying green technologies and services; prioritizing green infrastructure and buildings; protecting and restoring green spaces; creating more housing opportunities; reducing emissions, resource use and waste; and making more sustainable urban system and land use decisions. Coordination of place-based policies can enhance transportation choices, improve air and water quality, reduce waste, maintain reliable water and energy supply, advance public health and awareness, enhance disaster preparedness and response, increase climate resilience, use public resources more efficiently, help mobilize private investment, and strengthen local decision-making. Cities offer opportunities for capturing cross-cutting efficiencies, for example across water and energy systems, with joint strategies for resource management and public-private finance. Such sustainable urban development not only improves the health and wellbeing of current residents and businesses, but can also create jobs and attract new business.

The 6th World Urban Forum, held in Italy in 2013 showcased over 150 ‘networking’ and other events organized mostly by academic institutions, NGOs, national government agencies, professional associations and international funding agencies and foundations. Best practices and lessons learned were highlighted but need further trials based on the case study approach with dissemination and outreach of results; a key objective of the phase 2 project that began in October 2013.

**Update on Phase 1 -- 2011-2013 : OAS “*Sustainable Communities in Central American and the Caribbean*”** On June 2, 2013, the Department of Sustainable Development of the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development of the Organization of American States held a Sustainable Cities Implementers Workshop and Midterm Review of the 14 projects (for outputs from the 14 projects please visit: [http://www.oas.org/en/sedi/DSD/Biodiversity/Sustainable\\_Cities/SustainableCommunities.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/sedi/DSD/Biodiversity/Sustainable_Cities/SustainableCommunities.asp) and see Annex 1.) During the event the 14 implementers under the project presented the objectives, accomplishments and challenges encountered in the first implementation phase in each of their projects. Technical experts were invited to provide feedback and exchange ideas regarding opportunities for replicating projects throughout the Hemisphere and creating transformational change. For more information please visit:

[http://www.oas.org/en/sedi/dsd/Biodiversity/Sustainable\\_Cities/GA\\_Workshop/SCWorkshop.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/sedi/dsd/Biodiversity/Sustainable_Cities/GA_Workshop/SCWorkshop.asp)

The implementation of the 14 grants (see Annex 1) in phase 1 under the 4 pillars of energy, waste, hazard risk, and transport, the OAS Sustainable Communities Initiative, has given much insight into forward-thinking, progressive environmental strategies, policies and initiatives. We have identified dozens of examples of smart governance, efficient technologies and benchmarking environmental monitoring where cities move to limit the impacts of human consumption and ensure environmental and social quality.

Unfortunately, however, the many positive examples highlighted remain by and large best practices rather than standard practices. National, state and local governments working together to share authority in service to a common goal is lesson 1. Cities themselves need to take a more holistic approach to environmental problems and avoid addressing each issue in single, lone departments. Following this workshop, on June 3, 2013, the Department of Sustainable Development of the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development held a Sustainable Cities Round Table entitled: *Building Sustainable Cities and Communities in the Americas, Moving from Demonstration Projects to Scale* as part of the activities under the 43rd OAS General Assembly.

[http://www.oas.org/en/sedi/dsd/Biodiversity/Sustainable\\_Cities/GA\\_Round\\_Table/SCRoundTable.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/sedi/dsd/Biodiversity/Sustainable_Cities/GA_Round_Table/SCRoundTable.asp)

During the event, hosted by the Spanish Cooperation Training Center in Antigua that was also jointly organized by the Permanent Missions of Guatemala and the United States, participants discussed the challenges associated with rapid urbanization in the Americas and exchanged best practices for the sustainable development of cities and communities. The Secretary General of the OAS, José Miguel Insulza, opened the event, which featured the participation of the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Guatemala, Marcia Roxana Sobenes García; the Permanent Representative of the United States to the OAS, Carmen Lomellin; the Executive Secretary for Integral Development of the OAS, Sherry Tross; the Director of the Spanish Cooperation Training Center in Antigua, Jesus Oyamburu and the Mayors of Puebla (Mexico), Santa Catarina Pinula (Guatemala), and a representative from the City of Medellin (Colombia) among others.

In his welcoming remarks, Secretary General Insulza recalled that “urbanization in Latin America has increased at an extraordinary pace over the past 30 years.” He said the American Hemisphere is one of the most urbanized on the Planet, with cities that are home to over 80 percent of its population. “The rapid pace of urbanization poses serious challenges to community life, particularly in terms of housing and transportation, and to the quality of human health and the environment,” he said.

Secretary General Insulza went on to say “numerous innovative policies and strategies designed and implemented by governments and development agencies through the Hemisphere have been successful, and it is important to recognize them here. The member states face great challenges in making cities more functional. The rapid urbanization we have experienced will not be reversed; it will call for visionary, comprehensive policies for addressing problems like population growth, food security, citizen security, and energy and environmental security,” he concluded.

The opening of the event was also attended by the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Guatemala, Marcia Roxana Sobenes García, and the Permanent Representative of the United States to the OAS, Carmen Lomellin. They stressed that, as centers of innovation and economic creativity, cities in the Americas are drivers of growth and poverty reduction. They also noted the challenges of rapid urbanization, its environmental impact, and the need for coordinated efforts to allow the sharing of best practices and experiences in this area

Ambassador Lomellin said that, “in response to these challenges, we have the opportunity and responsibility to work together to develop shared solutions. No country or city has all the answers.” She recalled that, as for sustainable city and community development, “we are convinced that the most dynamic and fruitful collaboration will come from increased dialogue at the subnational level.”

For her part, Minister Roxana Sobenes Garcia said that “environmental and social problems don't recognize the territorial boundaries that we have defined and we respect. Environmental issues, protection against disasters, protection of our water, soil, and forests, public participation, compliance with environmental regulations, and promoting green economies are priorities we all share, and on which the Government of Guatemala believes we should focus our common vision.”

**Update on Phase 2 2013-2016: OAS “*Sustainable Communities in Central American and the Caribbean*”** Phase 2 has been already approved, and hopes to further assist Governments in the hemisphere to collaborate on a uniform standard for environmental data, so that a given city can easily compare its results to any other, in order to learn from its peers and improve its performance. Guaranteeing sustainable growth in the face of overwhelming urbanization is the biggest test in the coming decades. The project will catalogue the case studies and small grant projects and will develop a suite of information which will be used to shape the project pilots and demonstrators. Partners will also assess why industry and public authorities have not yet adopted existing best practice strategies, and understand the existing barriers. One element of this work will touch on public sector procurement processes to benchmark current practice, with which the project will influence further sustainable cities program activities.

Deliverables include:

- Report on current city logistics operations to highlight current best practice and the challenges faced by organizations;
- An analysis of current industry attitudes to adapting strategies and challenges faced by industry – covering physical, economic and behavioral issues;
- Case studies of best practice to highlight the drivers, challenges and benefits of sustainable city logistics;
- Identifying which sustainability indicators will be measured in the project, and setting baselines from which to measure the impact of the project demonstrators, this activity will focus on the environmental and economic effects of project implementation.

The project demonstrators will be evaluated against sustainability indicators to demonstrate their impacts and the economic and environmental benefits of sustainable solutions by working with the Steering Committee to agree on a set of measurable sustainability indicators.

Concurrently, related efforts advance, such as the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP) and the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA) that promote the development and use of sustainable energy technologies and services within OAS member states.

In this context, the project will promote sub national dialogue, capacity building and knowledge sharing on urban development. Furthermore, it will support on-the-ground initiatives and the exchange of best practices and technical assistance through matching grants to:




1. Implement co-financed Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) for sustainable urban development;
2. Improve the urban poor access to basic socioeconomic infrastructure;
3. Promote recycling of waste and encourage improved wastewater management;  
Increase resilience to natural disasters;
4. Promote energy efficient community based activities; and
5. Generate “green” employment opportunities at the community level.


ANNEXES

1. Ongoing small grants by thematic pillars under Sustainable Cities and Communities Phase I




## Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency

	<p>Dominican Republic</p>	<p><b><u>Centro Alternativo Rural el Limón (CAREL)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Provide technical assistance and capacity building to support and replicate a community-based highly participatory micro- hydroelectric initiative in the Dominican Republic.</li> </ul>
	<p>Guatemala</p>	<p><b><u>Fundación Solar</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Reduce carbon emissions and indoor pollution from the use of wood through the implementation of organic waste biodigestion technology for the production of biogás.</li> <li>✓ Strengthen the productive use of organic composting and adopt sustainable environmental practices in the micro watersheds of Xeúl Canchel and Chibalám Chimachó, located in Cubulco municipality, Baja Verapaz department, in the northern area of Guatemala</li> </ul>
	<p>Nicaragua</p>	<p><b><u>Universidad Tecnológica La Salle (ULSA)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Reduce energy dependence on fossil fuels and vulnerability to severe and prolonged drought through the creation of a vegetable oil micro industry with capacity to produce 8,000 lt/year and by planting 24,000 plants of Jatropha curcas in already degraded land unsuitable for other crops reducing 15.6 MT CO2 emissions and protecting livelihoods in the rural communities of El Espino and Las Lomas in Leon, Nicaragua.</li> </ul>



	<p>Nicaragua</p>	<p><b><u>Universidad Nacional Agraria (UNA-Managua)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Install 30 stand-alone Photovoltaic Systems for rural electrification of local communities in Las Jaguas, Orocuina and El Espinal micro-watersheds and strengthen the capacities of key actors in the development of renewable energies through training in the use of specialized software with state of the art technology in the design of PV systems.</li> </ul>
--	------------------	---



## Resilience to Natural Hazards


	<p>Guatemala</p>	<p><b><u>Fundación ProPetén</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Reduce wildfire risk by strengthening capacities for integrated fire management in agricultural productive activities of two communities in the buffer zone around a protected area in the Maya Biosphere Reserve in Peten, Guatemala.</li> <li>✓ Design and implement wildfire risk management protocols and early warning systems, create, equip and train two wildfire commissions at the community and municipal level in detection and immediate responses well as two community brigades prepared for the control and extinction of wildfires.</li> </ul>
--	------------------	--





	<p>Guatemala</p>	<p><b><u>Centro Para la Investigación y Planificación del Desarrollo Maya Sotz'il</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Strengthen the capacity of indigenous communities to prevent and mitigate the risk of natural disasters in the Central Highlands of Guatemala focusing on their traditional knowledge for risk management.</li> <li>✓ Developing an early warning and response system and adopting sustainable productive practices as an adaptation effort to climate change.</li> </ul>
	<p>St. Kitts y Nevis</p>	<p><b><u>HOPE Nevis Incorporated</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Build community resilience to drought, flooding and other natural hazards in one community in each of Nevis' five parishes by implementing sustainable preventative practices to safeguard the communities from hazards and equip the local population with the knowledge and technical skills to prepare, respond to and minimize the fallouts from natural and human induced hazards.</li> </ul>



## Sustainable Transport Solutions



	<p>Costa Rica</p>	<p><b><u>Centro de Derecho Ambiental y de los Recursos Naturales (CEDARENA) y Fundación para el Desarrollo Urbano (FUDEU)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Contribute to the implementation of an alternative integrated urban transport system in the greater metropolitan area of Costa Rica by identifying opportunities and obstacles related to expanding the bicycle paths and the interconnection with the urban train.</li> </ul>
--	-------------------	---

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Contribute to the development of bicycle paths by installing infrastructure such as traffic signs and bicycle parking in train stations, parks, stores and other strategic places reducing carbon emissions from traditional transportation systems.</li> <li>✓ Educate pedestrians, car and bicycle users about their responsibilities and rights and raise awareness within the local governments of San Jose, Cartago and Montes de Oca to promote bicycle use.</li> </ul>
	<p>St. Kitts y Nevis</p>	<p><b><u>The Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Introduce Sustainable Transportation for St. Kitts-Nevis with the use of facilities for non-motorized modes in Basseterre City.</li> <li>✓ Develop a database for transportation statistics to inform policy and forecast needs to avoid potentially costly mitigation measures.</li> <li>✓ Formulate a Transportation Plan as an element of the General Plan Framework or Master Plan for the country and implementation framework for re-distribution of mode share, with emphasis on reducing traffic congestion, pollution, and cost to commuters.</li> </ul>
	<p>Trinidad y Tobago</p>	<p><b><u>St. Augustine Campus of The University of the West Indies (UWI) - Caribbean Network for Urban Land Management (CNULM)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Comparatively analyze built and cultural heritage of five Caribbean cities (Willemstad, Paramaribo, Bridgetown, St. Georges and East Port-of-Spain), three of which are UNESCO World Heritage Sites and one of which seeks that designation, for elements of smart urban design that decrease car use and encourage walking and cycling as well as potential to generate local economic development and serve as a model for new urban development.</li> <li>✓ Produce technical, policy, and academic papers as well as a workshop at the Caribbean Urban Forum 2013.</li> </ul>



## Waste management, Recycling (including electronic waste) and Improved Water Resource Management

	<p>Belize</p>	<p><b><u>Plenty International Belize Ltd.</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Support waste management efforts through education and alternative solid waste disposal.</li> <li>✓ Heighten community awareness on the importance of reducing the environmental impacts of solid waste disposal while gathering data to identify diversified recycling and reuse methods beneficial for sustainable community development in Punta Gorda, Belize.</li> <li>✓ Determine the feasibility of a sustainable recycling facility for the Toledo District.</li> </ul>
	<p>El Salvador</p>	<p><b><u>Centro Regional del Convenio de Basilea para Centroamérica y México (CRCB-CAM)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Formulate the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Strategy for Central America through participatory approach and improve the environmentally sound management of WEEE in participating countries.</li> <li>✓ Strengthen the coordination of WEEE efforts among regional organizations, governments, private sector, NGOs and Universities strengthening the institutional capacities at the regional and national level.</li> </ul>

	<p>Grenada</p>	<p><b><u>The Grenada Project</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Recycle certain waste streams including fish and other officials, brewer’s spent grain, market waste, restaurant and hotel food waste and crop waste to manufacture a protein product that will lower the cost of feeding poultry and significantly improve the livelihoods of Grenada’s farmers while avoiding putting noxious organic wastes in the local landfill and generating odor problems. Providing a method for the disposing of used motor oil and disseminate this highly replicable technology to other countries in the region.</li> </ul>
	<p>Nicaragua</p>	<p><b><u>Hermandad de Honduras</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Create a waste management system through a micro-enterprise model, creating jobs and opportunities</li> <li>✓ Develop an organic waste treatment plant for the Sensenti Valley region in the southwestern province of Ocotepeque, Honduras.</li> </ul>