

SymbioCity supports local governments in addressing several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in implementing the principles of the New Urban Agenda. The overall goal is to improve living conditions with a special emphasis on the urban poor.

ABOUT US

SymbioCity

SYMBIOCITY is based on Swedish municipalities' approach to urban development and experiences from implementing this in transition- and developing countries. Since 2010, with funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) and SALAR International have used SymbioCity as an approach and a method to promote sustainable urban development and contribute to the alleviation of urban poverty around the globe.

SALAR International

A part of the Swedish Association
of Local Authorities and Regions

SALAR International is a fully-owned subsidiary of SALAR and implements international projects on their behalf. SALAR International houses the SymbioCity Secretariat with access to a variety of methodologies and tools to be practically used by cities in the field.

Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions


SALAR is a large member organisation with a long history of supporting Swedish municipalities, county councils and regions to provide better and more efficient service delivery to its citizens. Swedish municipalities have earned international recognition in the field of sustainable urban development not least for their best practice solutions and holistic approach.

To learn more about SymbioCity phone + 46 (0)8 452 70 00 or e-mail info@symbiocity.se

SymbioCity

Towards sustainable
and inclusive cities





Urbanisation is one of the twenty-first century's most transformative trends. Cities of today contain the answers of tomorrow.

Towards sustainable and inclusive cities

SymbioCity is a holistic and inclusive approach to sustainable urban development. Since 2010, SymbioCity has been used as a supportive tool for cities in different countries around the world with the overall goal to improve living conditions for citizens with a special emphasis on the urban poor.

The approach is based on the experiences of Swedish local governments as well as those of transition- and developing countries. SymbioCity provides methods, processes and tools that ensure a holistic and visionary approach to urban development

The approach integrates spatial, environmental, socio-cultural and economic dimensions with urban systems and institutional perspectives in ways that are mutually supportive or synergistic.

An important part of the method is that it invites and embraces the participation of urban citizens, the private sector, academia and civil society to share their insights, experiences and perspectives, and it promotes gender and pro-poor perspectives in urban development processes.



“The SymbioCity process has been a very significant experience. We have found other ways to work with communities. We have also opened our way of working and thinking to plan projects that impact the town”.

Marcela Restrepo (to the right) Adviser, Department for Territorial Planning, Apartadó Colombia, together with Nancy Pardo Estrada, (to the left) Civil Engineer, Department for Infrastructure, participating in a working visit in Stockholm.

Cities define the future

Global development agendas, agreements and frameworks recognise the correlation between good urbanisation and urban development, focusing on cities as a source to the solution rather than the cause of the challenges the world is facing. Cities are the drivers of political, economic, social and cultural development. Making them attractive, safe, healthy and liveable is therefore crucial for a more sustainable future.

Urbanisation and urban development are complex and dynamic processes, not least in the developing world. SymbioCity offers a response to the question of *how* to transform urban areas in a sustainable direction.

Urban challenges and opportunities

Today, more than half the world's population resides in urban areas. By 2050 the urban population is expected to double, transforming the world over the twenty-first century. Regions across the world that are still predominantly rural will transition to become urban societies. Rapid, unplanned and uncoordinated urbanisation often poses challenges such as an adequate supply of housing, a suitable infrastructure, the provision of basic services, questions of safety and the sensitive use of natural resources.

Social and economic exclusion, spatial segregation and environmental degradation are often realities in cities and towns. The increasing speed and scale of urbanisation, especially in developing countries and countries in rapid transition, leads to the question of how to practically transform cities and towns into more sustainable, equitable, viable and inclusive environments.

Properly governed, planned and managed urban areas can contribute to improved livelihoods and living conditions and offer enhanced opportunities for people to meet, work, access public services, enjoy social and cultural benefits and fulfil their dreams. Cities present the potential for developing sustainable production and consumption patterns and reducing carbon emissions. Climate change is a global concern, but its effects are local, and local measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change are essential. Thus, cities are central both to combating climate change and alleviating poverty.

Achieving the goals of Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda

The Sustainable Development Goals in Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda are two global agendas that recognise the significance of urbanisation and its potential. They stress the importance of a holistic, integrated and inclusive approach to urban development.

They also recognise the key role that local governments can play in implementing these agendas and improving people's living conditions.

SymbioCity approach contributes to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals at the local level and delivers specifically on SDG 11 (make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable).

Further, it provides processes, tools and concrete experiences that support local governments in turning the NUA principles into practice at local level, bridging the gap between sectors and stakeholders.



THE GLOBAL GOALS
For Sustainable Development



IMPLEMENTING
THE NEW
URBAN AGENDA



Tunisia is one of the countries supported by SymbioCity with the aim of developing more sustainable and inclusive cities.



Two of the key aspects of the SymbioCity are developing synergies between different urban systems and integrated solutions.

SymbioCity supports implementation of both Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda

Business
 Rent of boards, bikes
 Tourism
 Restaurants, cafes
 Coffee trailer
 Development

“I’m impressed with the methods and processes which help us to learn how to develop our dreams, and how to deal with the obstacles we can encounter in achieving the dreams we have developed”.

U Kyaw Myin Tun, Staff officer, Environmental Conservation Department, Dawei, Myanmar.



Virtual interactive walk tours are used as tool for analysing and understanding different spaces of a city in Myanmar.

The SymbioCity approach

SymbioCity promotes a holistic and inclusive approach to sustainable urban development, which includes environmental, socio-cultural, economic and spatial dimensions.

The approach provides opportunities to improve living standards and well-being, safety, comfort and quality of life for all by including multiple stakeholders and citizens in urban development processes.

The conceptual framework is generic and is applied in a flexible way according to the conditions and needs of the context. It takes a responsive stance to optimise processes already in use.

A holistic approach: seeing the bigger picture

SymbioCity promotes a holistic and comprehensive way of thinking before considering specific solutions and interventions. It integrates economic, environmental, socio-cultural and spatial dimensions; and includes institutional as well as long-term and visionary perspectives. It allows you to see the bigger picture and how different urban functions and systems are interrelated today and in a possible future.

We start by looking at the assets the city can leverage in addressing the challenges identified using a “vision-based” instead of “problem-based” approach. Cities are supported to find different kinds of solutions and thereby helped to turn problems into solutions. As opposed to planning and development in silos, SymbioCity promotes connections between sectors and involvement of various actors and disciplines to allow for synergies and integrated solutions that make better use of local resources and assets.

An inclusive approach: cities for all

Our ultimate development goal is to improve all residents' quality of life, health, comfort and safety. Cities should be for everyone. Different groups experience the city differently and may have different stores of knowledge, needs and dreams. This needs to be addressed in the planning and development of the city. We do this by promoting participatory processes and inclusion of citizens, private sector and civil society to share their insights, experiences and perspectives.

By putting special emphasis on gender perspectives and the urban poor the SymbioCity aims to contribute to poverty reduction and improved living conditions for all.

A responsive approach: local ownership is the key

Local leadership and ownership are key factors to transforming an urban environment in a positive direction. The approach does not provide ready-made solutions to all urban challenges. Instead, it offers local elected representatives and officials methods and tools for successfully working towards sustainable urban development and a way of moving from ideas to action.

The solutions that emerge will be local. The ownership will be local. SymbioCity strives to strengthen existing structures and processes, to not introduce new ones.



“I could learn how an urban system can play a role in poverty reduction and that development does not necessarily mean building up only new things, it also means improving what we already have”.

Daw Thun Thiri Htut, Staff Officer, Department of Urban and Housing Development, Dawei, Myanmar.

The SymbioCity method

SymbioCity provides methods, processes and tools that support local governments and urban stakeholders looking at the whole system; from planning to development and management of urban areas. SymbioCity works from visions and strategies, through integrated urban planning to urban improvements, integrated and inclusive solutions, impact assessments and strengthened management of urban areas.

An iterative process

SymbioCity provides a generic and cyclical working procedure that can be used for various purposes. The working process can be adapted to the prevailing local conditions. In most cases, it is neither possible nor recommended to work in a linear fashion through all the steps. There are many advantages to be gained from working in a flexible, iterative or cyclical manner. The main entry point of the process will be defined to meet local priorities and circumstances as well as ongoing planning cycles.

The working procedure can be applied on different levels – the region, the city, the city-district, the neighbourhood or a single street block. For example, the process can be used for reviewing and providing strategic directions and for improving the sustainability dimensions in existing city plans; to implement existing plans and to identify and implement necessary institutional, organisational and managerial changes.

The method is iterative and reflects back and forth during the whole process to be able to adjust interactive solutions.



SymbioCity promotes a holistic and inclusive approach to sustainable urban development, which includes environmental, socio-cultural, economic and spatial dimensions.



STEP 1 AND 2
Define and organise the work.
Make a diagnosis of current situation.



STEP 3 AND 4
Specify key issues and objectives.
Develop proposals.



STEP 5 AND 6
Analyse anticipated, potential impacts. Choose a strategy for implementation, monitoring and follow-up

A six-step procedure

This iterative working process is structured around a six-step working procedure that includes the following main steps:

1. Define and organise the work
2. Make a diagnosis of the current situation
3. Specify key issues and objectives
4. Develop alternative proposals
5. Analyse anticipated, potential impacts
6. Choose a strategy for implementation, monitoring and follow-up.

Each step in the process is accompanied by various tools. However, some of the tools can be used in more than one step. It is also possible to combine the tools in a creative way, depending on the specific planning situation.

“I find the SymbioCity methodology very strong; the ‘diagnosis’ creates a great foundation for sustainability work. And because the approach is so flexible, parts of it can be made to fit into the local context under our Green City Development Programme”.

Endra Atmawidjaja, Deputy Director of Urban Development Policies and Strategies at the Directorate General of Spatial Planning and Development, Indonesia.

In the city of Pitalito, Colombia, citizens of different ages and social groups were invited to share their perceived challenges in relation to mobility in the city and how the situation could be improved.

¡Ayúdanos a mejorar la movilidad d

¡Comparte tus sueños y tus ideas! ¿Qué problema

 Bicicleta	 Seguridaa	 Parqueo
 Espacios públicos	 Cultura ciudadana	 Movilidad del carro
 Acceso para todos	 Transporte público	 Movilidad de motos

¡Ayúdanos a mejorar la movilidad d


¿En qué barrio vives?
¿En qué te mueves?



- A pie
- En bici
- En moto
- En bus
- En taxi
- En carro



A local clean-up day resulting in a cleaner and safer Ahero in Kisumu county, Kenya, with women as the engine!



“With SymbioCity, we not only bring people together, we also bring the various departments and arms of government in a working table whereby the issues addressed are seen from a wider scope of spectra. This is a very big plus”.

Stephen Sule, Pilot Coordinator for Kisumu County, Kenya.

What we do

SymbioCity supports cities and towns do develop in a sustainable and inclusive way; from the early stages of planning to tangible results on the ground. We work with different steps in the process of planning, developing and managing the city. The type of support depends on the needs, priorities and circumstances in the local context.

Most SymbioCity projects include several of the components on all the following pages, as they are part of a larger puzzle that is logically interconnected through an iterative working process.

Urban Sustainability Reviews

The urban sustainability review is a process, a tool and a product where various urban stakeholders jointly explore the city from a holistic perspective. This is an inclusive way of selecting and describing key urban sustainability issues that the city needs to address, as well as its key assets and opportunities, which should be leveraged in development projects and actions. The review provides a diagnosis of the current situation and identifies needs, challenges and opportunities of the urban area, which are then used to select key urban sustainability issues. This is often a necessary first step in the SymbioCity process, after which the visions, strategies and urban development action identified can be addressed.



Citizens of different ages and social groups were invited to indicate the three areas that most urgently needed addressing in Apartadó and express their dreams for the city.

EXAMPLE

Citizens' dreams and proposals in Apartadó, Colombia

The city of Apartadó in Colombia conducted an urban sustainability review to assess their current situation and to create a common knowledge base before moving to making decisions.

The process included consultations with the private sector as well as with citizens. A participatory event was organised in two parks in central Apartadó, where citizens of different ages and social groups were invited to indicate which three areas were the most urgent to address, choosing between health, housing, waste management, job opportunities, drinking water, security, mobility, education, civic culture, recreation and green spaces. They were also encouraged to describe their dreams and make proposals of their own.

The review resulted in a better understanding of the reasons for the current situation in the city and trends, as well as how different areas and sectors were interconnected. Based on this analysis, the stakeholders of Apartadó were able to make informed decisions about which issues to prioritise for further development.



A vision workshop provided the officials at the municipality in Palu, Sulawesi, Indonesia, with the vision of a greener, cleaner and more sustainable Palu.

Visions and Urban Development Strategies

Cities need a long-term approach to achieve sustainable urban development. This requires clear visions, goals and strategies that balance different needs, demands and priorities.

Any vision – for the entire city or a particular area – must be context-driven and developed with the participation of all segments of the population, including women, youth and vulnerable groups.

The “buy-in” to the vision will ensure a higher degree of inclusiveness and ownership as well as new perspectives and information. SymbioCity supports cities in developing visions, goals and strategies for short, medium and long-term improvement of urban areas and different sectors. Gender and pro-poor perspectives are integrated to ensure an inclusive approach.

EXAMPLE Building from the assets up in Palu, Indonesia

One of the first steps of the SymbioCity cooperation between Palu and Borås (Sweden) was to hold an assets and vision workshop. Rather than focusing on the city's challenges, the vision grew out of the city's possibilities and assets. The positive transformation of the attitudes of the citizens, officials, local planners and experts increased their self-confidence and helped them discover their own capacity to solve their problems.

The participation of people and stakeholders from different walks of life at the workshop provided municipal officials with the qualitative knowledge about their city that might otherwise have been difficult to obtain. Many discussions and workshops later, it all came together to “The vision – Kota Palu in 2030 – a greener, cleaner, more sustainable Palu”.

Developing integrated and inclusive solutions

Challenges and problems in urban areas are often very complex. Integrated and inclusive solutions are needed, together with a programmatic approach to urban improvements rather than single-sector projects. A diagnosis of the current situation and defining objectives and targets serve as a basis for identifying and formulating alternative development proposals. There is often a wide range of relevant alternative and innovative solutions. Solutions that emphasise the synergies between different urban systems should be evaluated in terms of their sustainability and flexibility, as investments should be relevant for many years.

EXAMPLE Implementation of urban improvements in Kiminini, Kenya

Kiminini in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya, is badly affected by a failed waste management system. The SymbioCity process identified a solution, which would improve the physical environment and promote responsibility among residents. Waste bins separating organic and non-organic waste will be placed all over town. Each bin has a tree planted next to it with a park bench underneath, and each bin has a person or organisation assigned as care-taker.

During implementation, participation of residents will be instrumental for success. Young people are involved in producing waste bins, benches and other input, as well as in emptying waste bins and composting. To raise awareness, environmental clubs will be established in schools, and clean-up days are organised for the entire town. Through the project, Kiminini will become a greener and more pleasant town, where residents feel pride and responsibility towards keeping their town clean, and with less clogged drains and flooding.



Kiminini in Trans-Nzoia County. One of seven pilots in Kenya.



Scenario matrix exercise for analysing alternative solutions and their impacts for the development of Dawei City, Myanmar.

Supporting the implementation of urban improvements

Moving from visions and plans to action can be difficult. It is one thing to identify possible solutions and another to implement them on the ground. Achieving change and tangible results often requires a mix of “hardware” and “software”, as well as political and financial support. The implementation of urban improvements can be initiated during a SymbioCity project, but it requires continuous commitment from the cities to ensure its long-term sustainability. SymbioCity supports implementation of integrated and inclusive proposals that have been developed through the SymbioCity process. Depending on the conditions, such support can include process support, technical assistance and in some cases the financing of demonstration projects.

EXAMPLE

A Seed Fund for Kenyan Counties, Kenya

In cooperation with the Council of Governors in Kenya, SymbioCity has created a seed fund for seven towns around the country to implement small-scale urban improvements. These demonstration projects could serve as generators for further innovative solutions to urban challenges, and could be replicated by other cities and towns in the region. Projects should contribute to reducing urban poverty and improve the urban environment.

The solutions have been developed through the SymbioCity methodology and cover issues such as placemaking, urban greening, public space, water and sanitation, management of solid waste and development of local economic development. Maintaining the integrated and inclusive approach during implementation is also critical to success.

Capacity Development of Urban Stakeholders

Strengthening people's capacities and abilities at the local level is an important precondition of cities' ability to take control of their own development and work towards sustainable urban development. SymbioCity contributes to capacity development by strengthening the knowledge and competence of local politicians and local officials; promoting interdisciplinary and participatory working procedures in local governments; identifying key institutional frameworks needed for achieving urban sustainability; and by facilitating cooperation and knowledge exchange between local, regional and national stakeholders.

EXAMPLE

Capacitating a critical mass of urban development stakeholders, Myanmar

Together with the Ministry of Construction and the Urban Research and Development Institute, SymbioCity has implemented a practical capacity development programme in Myanmar with the overall ambition to capacitate a critical mass of urban development stakeholders for a pro-poor sustainable urban development. The three cities of Dawei, Kalay and Kalaw are points of departure and the training includes participants from all levels of government, jointly developing the strategy for a more sustainable development of the three cities.

The programme provides hands-on experiences of different approaches to urban planning, development and management as well as building long-term capacity through training of trainers and relevant research studies.

Different SymbioCity tools are used throughout the programme, including participatory events and field analysis.

Urban leadership

Political leaders and decision-makers are crucial in moving things forward. Sustainable urban development depends on committed, inspiring and capable leadership. Experiences of sustainable leadership from Sweden and globally have been set out in a SymbioCity guide for decision-makers called “**Get Started, Move Forward**” that is based on discussions and workshops with political leaders as well as decision-makers from around the world. The guide is used in capacity development programmes and workshops to raise awareness of the importance of involving political leaders and decision-makers in sustainable urban development and provides practical advice for more effective and inclusive leadership at local level as well as that support action.

Walk-through evaluation in Myanmar – analysing space.



SymbioCity around the globe

Since 2010, SymbioCity has implemented various projects and activities in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. Our work can be categorised in three areas:

- City projects
- Capacity development programmes
- Advocacy and dissemination of experiences

City projects

A City project supports the development of a specific city or urban area in a more sustainable and inclusive direction. The City projects are driven by local actors to ensure that the knowledge and experience obtained through the project is maintained and institutionalised locally.

SymbioCity support includes process support, international and local expertise as well as peer-to-peer exchanges. Through workshops, practical work and on-the-job training, local governments and other urban stakeholders are strengthened in their capacity to plan, manage and develop their urban areas in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

City projects are usually connected with one or several institutional partners at national and regional levels in country in which they are established. Currently, 14 cities and urban areas in four different countries (*Kenya, Colombia, Ethiopia and Tunisia*) are supported in this way. Previously, four cities in Indonesia, China and Zambia have also been supported.

City projects
in 3 continents



Debre Berhan is one of two cities supported by City Projects in Ethiopia.



A participative public event in Apartadó with the aim of learning more about local security conditions.

Capacity development programmes

Based on the specific needs and interests of targeted countries, capacity development programmes are tailored to develop knowledge and competence in urban sustainability at various levels of society. For example, together with the Ministry of Construction, SymbioCity implements a 3-year capacity development programme in Myanmar.

In cooperation with the International Centre for Local Democracy, SymbioCity delivers an International Training Programme with participants from Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine. Previously, an International Training Programme was implemented in East-Africa as well as an e-learning course in the Asia-Pacific region.



Participants of the International Training Programme carrying out a Grid Analysis to identify the "Wants, Don't Wants, Haves and Don't Haves" of their city.

Capacity
development
programmes
in 3 continents

Advocacy and dissemination of experiences

As part of SymbioCity's overall objective to influence urban development policies and processes globally, experiences from SymbioCity processes are disseminated from the countries we collaborate with to a wider audience of urban stakeholders at global, regional, national and local levels. This is done mainly through networking, dissemination activities and the production of information material as well as the development of hands-on methodologies.

SymbioCity has also been used for gender advice and support in the country programmes of the Cities Alliance.



"SymbioCity brings a new model. Now we have come up with solutions that are pro-poor focused and that are directly linked to the needs of a common location, area or region".

Richard Bonyo, pilot coordinator Homa Bay County, Kenya.