



ADVANCING THE **HIV RESPONSE** IN URBAN SETTINGS

Key resources for UNAIDS country offices and joint United Nations teams, Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM), Technical Support Mechanism (TSM) and other consultants

Why a focus on urban settings?

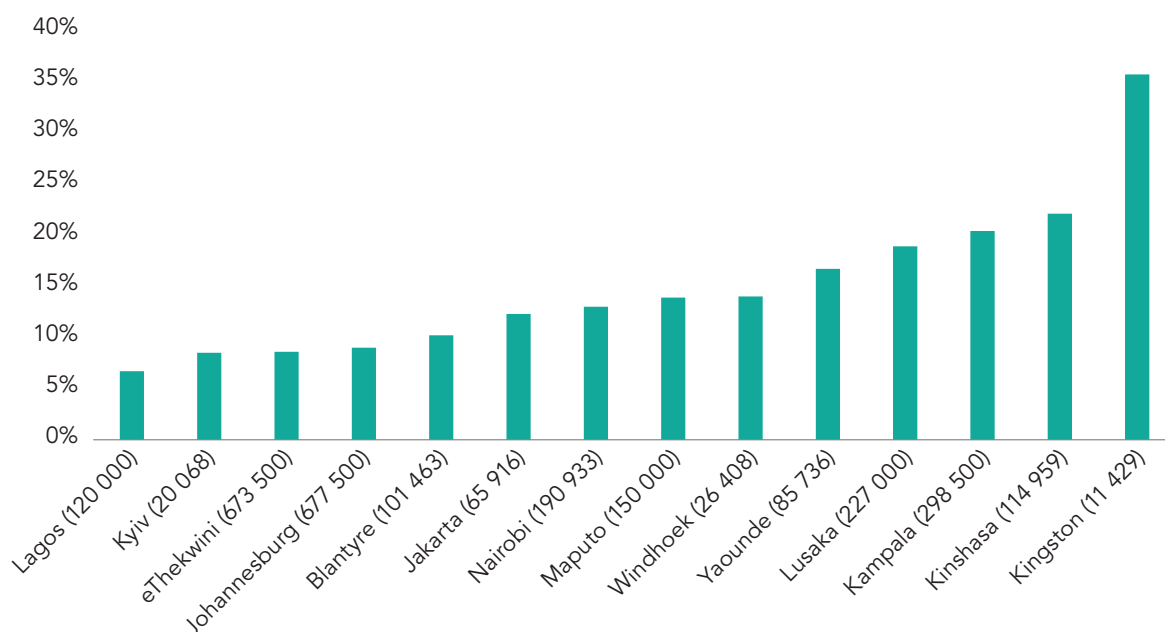
Urbanization is one of the most important global trends of the 21st century.¹ More than half of the world's population currently live in urban areas, and this proportion is expected to increase to 68% by 2050.² The future of health and development will therefore be significantly shaped by cities and urban settings, and the decisions of its leaders.

Cities account for increasing proportions of national HIV burdens, and in many countries, a single city may account for 20% or more of all people living with HIV (Figure 1). UNAIDS estimates that about one quarter of all people living with HIV reside in only 200 cities.³ The risk and vulnerability to HIV and other diseases is often higher in urban compared to rural areas because of urban dynamics such as migration, unemployment, social and economic inequalities, violence and discrimination, particularly affecting fragile communities such as those living in informal settlements.⁴ Key and vulnerable populations also largely reside in cities and often face challenges in accessing services such as HIV prevention, testing and treatment because of stigma and discriminatory laws and practices.⁵

At the same time, cities as centres of innovation and economic development offer important opportunities and have inherent advantages in responding to complex health and social problems such as HIV and other emerging crises. Cities can drive innovation and scientific developments, unite diverse partners, develop locally appropriate strategies and use their ordinances and by-laws to affect positive change, and to deliver services where they are most needed, in a way that is both equitable and efficient, while respecting the dignity of all its citizens.³

Strategies developed by, and actions taken in cities will, to a large extent, determine whether the world can achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

Figure 1. Proportion of all people living with HIV in a country residing in one city (numbers in brackets represent the number of people living with HIV in the city)



Source: Data from 15 cities included in the Joint UNAIDS-IAPAC Fast-Track Cities project. City-specific profiles available from <https://fasttrackcitiesmap.unaids.org/>

1 European Strategy and Policy Analysis System. Global Trends to 2030: The future of urbanization and megacities. European Union, 2019.

2 UN-Habitat. Envisaging the Future of Cities. World Cities Report 2022. Available at https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/06/wcr_2022.pdf

3 UNAIDS. Cities ending the AIDS epidemic. Geneva, 2016.

4 Zerbo A, Delgado RC, Gonzalez PA. Vulnerability and everyday health risks of urban informal settlements in sub-Saharan Africa. Global Health Journal 2022; 4(2): 46-50.

5 UNAIDS considers the four main key population groups to include: gay men and other men who have sex with men, sex workers, transgender people and people who inject drugs. Vulnerable populations are defined as groups of people subject to societal pressures or social circumstances that may make them more vulnerable to exposure to HIV infection.

Fast-Track Cities Initiative

Recognizing the critical role that cities play in the HIV response, the **Fast-Track Cities Initiative** was launched in Paris on World AIDS Day 2014, with a call on cities to accelerate local HIV responses towards achieving ambitious targets and ending AIDS in cities by 2030. The initiative is a global partnership between cities and municipalities around the world, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the International Association of Providers of AIDS Care (IAPAC), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and the City of Paris.

Since its launch, more than **400 cities** and municipalities in approximately 90 countries across the world have joined the initiative and endorsed the Paris Declaration on Fast-Track Cities Ending the AIDS Epidemic (the **Paris Declaration**) with the goal to improve HIV services and the health and lives of their citizens.

The Paris Declaration aims to galvanize cities to achieve critical targets to address disparities in access to health and social services, and to meet the global goal of ending AIDS by 2030.

Signatories to the **Paris Declaration** commit to seven core actions:

- End the AIDS epidemic in cities by 2030
- Put people at the centre of the AIDS response
- Address the causes of risk, vulnerability and HIV transmission
- Use the city AIDS response for positive social transformation
- Build and accelerate an appropriate response reflecting local needs
- Mobilize resources for integrated health and sustainable development
- Unite as leaders, work inclusively and report annually on progress

Building on the collaborative partnership, UNAIDS and IAPAC, with support from PEPFAR and USAID, launched a joint Fast-Track Cities **project** in 2018 with the aim to provide expanded and essential technical support to 15 priority cities over a five-year period. The project was built upon four key pillars:

- Supporting the development and implementation of city HIV Strategic Plans
- Creating an enabling environment for implementation
- Ensuring the availability and use of strategic information
- Building capacity of stakeholders

The 15 participating cities have made significant **progress** since the start of the project. **Good Practices** have been written up, and lessons learned can inform the actions and strategies in other urban settings.

A key activity for the participating and other cities moving forward is to ensure that progress and actions can be sustained and that cities have sufficient resources to enable them to deliver on key targets and commitments for the HIV response.

Urban focus in the 2021–2026 Global AIDS Strategy

Under the leadership of UNAIDS, the **Global AIDS Strategy 2021–2026** was developed to guide the global HIV response towards ending AIDS and ending inequalities. The new Strategy includes urban settings as a cross-cutting issue in all areas of the Strategy and highlights the centrality of cities and other human settlements in the HIV response. It underscores the role of cities and human settlements as being uniquely positioned to address multidimensional challenges such as HIV through inclusive participation from diverse stakeholders. The Strategy calls on all partners to reinforce the leading roles of cities in addressing rights issues, reducing inequalities and social exclusion, and protecting their citizens against risks and vulnerabilities.

A set of key considerations and priority actions for programmatic interventions that are relevant for cities in various contexts is being developed and should be available by the second quarter of 2023. The guidance is expected to help city authorities to ensure a strategic and impactful local HIV response that is aligned with the new Global AIDS Strategy for 2021–2026.

The key considerations and priority actions will be drawn from the experiences and lessons learned by global, regional and local stakeholders who are engaged in the delivery of HIV prevention, care and treatment programs globally, and evidence gathered from the Fast-Track Cities Initiative and the PEPFAR/USAID-supported Joint UNAIDS-IAPAC Fast-Track Cities project.

Why a resource pack? Why/how to include an urban focus in National AIDS Strategic Plans and in country Global Fund grant requests?

This resource pack provides information related to urban HIV responses that may be helpful to UNAIDS country offices, joint UN AIDS teams, Global Fund Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCM), Technical Support Mechanism (TSM) and other consultants, and to encourage the inclusion of urban settings and city focused approaches in National HIV Strategic Plans and the Global Fund grant requests being developed at country level.

In addition to mobilizing new resources, it underscores the importance of leveraging existing resources, policies and systems for strengthening HIV responses in urban settings, including strengthening HIV prevention, testing, treatment and care, with a focus on key populations and other priority groups, addressing societal barriers, and building strong monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure the availability of strategic information at the local level.

The information and resources that are part of this document, including lessons learned and good practices that have been documented at city level, will provide an overview of the work that has been done and the successes achieved by cities with support from the Fast-Track Cities (FTC) partners.

LINKS TO CONTENT

- [Paris Declaration and Sevilla \(Community\) Declaration](#)
- [UNAIDS Fast-Track Cities Webpage](#)
- [IAPAC Fast-Track Cities Webpage](#)
- Reports featuring good practices from urban settings
 - [Ending AIDS, Ending Inequalities: Fast-Track Cities](#)
 - [Cities on the Road to Success](#)
- Summary of the [Joint UNAIDS IAPAC Fast-Track Cities Project](#)
- [UNAIDS Rapid review to take stock of the Joint UNAIDS-IAPAC Fast-Track Cities Project \(2020\)](#)
- UNAIDS interactive map and [UNAIDS city epidemic profiles](#)
- [IAPAC City Dashboards](#)
- [UNAIDS Global AIDS Update 2023](#)
- [UNAIDS Global AIDS Strategy 2021–2026](#)

Contacts at UNAIDS:

For more information, please reach out to:

- Eleanor Gouwse, Senior Advisor, gouwse@unaids.org
- Pascal Muriset, Programme Officer, [murisetp@unaids.org](mailto:мурisetp@unaids.org)

