



The Global Cities Fund for Inclusive Pandemic Response Awards Freetown for the Freetown Waste Management Micro-Enterprise Program

Freetown joins four other cities to deliver solutions for urgent needs of migrants and displaced

January 7, 2021 - Today, Freetown was selected as a recipient of the inaugural Global Cities Fund for Inclusive Pandemic Response, a \$1,000,000 initiative to respond to the unmet needs of cities as they support migrants, refugees, and internally displaced people (IDPs) during COVID-19. Launched by the [Mayors Migration Council](#), a mayor-led advisory organization that helps cities influence national and international policy on migration and refugee issues, the Global Cities Fund will provide direct financial and technical support over one year to Freetown and four other cities from low-to-middle income countries to implement projects related to health and sanitation, livelihoods and employment, and inclusive social services.

Freetown will receive \$174,000 to support the establishment of 40 sustainable waste management micro-enterprises to deliver waste collection services within informal settlements and to other Freetown residents. Through this program, the city will ensure that more youth living in informal settlements, many of whom are rural migrants, access the opportunity to jointly improve their livelihoods and improve public health outcomes for many communities and the city. Successful applicants will be provided with initial business investment support that includes a motorized tricycle cart, sanitation tools, business registration, training and business development mentoring. The income generated from the waste collection will help the entrepreneurs pay back 80% of the cost of equipment over the course of a year, which will in turn unlock funds for a new set of youth to participate in the program next year. The program builds on gains made by 80 existing waste management micro-enterprises who, through Freetown's support over the last year, are providing waste collection services to almost 30,000 households.

With 95 percent of reported COVID-19 cases in urban areas, cities are on the frontlines of the global public health crisis and its socio-economic impact. The pandemic presents unique challenges to many urban migrants, refugees, and IDPs due to their legal and immigration status, their reliance on informal employment, and their restricted access to public health services and benefits. Their experiences are complicated by language and cultural barriers, xenophobia, racism, and discrimination.

In Sierra Leone, as job losses resulting from COVID-19 mount and work opportunities reduce, national food insecurity has risen sharply from 53.4% in August 2019 to 63% in June 2020 and the number of households able to consume all meals in a week dropped by 20% from April to July. Evidence suggests that households are cutting back food consumption because of the pandemic, and this situation is exacerbated in the rural migrant dominated informal settlements where there is little buffer or cash savings to meet income shocks by COVID-19 restrictions as 75% of households had an income of less than \$1 per day.

In Freetown, COVID-induced loss of work opportunities and hunger in informal communities, where majority of rural migrants live, is compounded by a lack of access to clean water for hand washing – a key preventative measure for COVID and myriad other communicable diseases. With up to 44% of residents in informal settlements reporting that they dispose of their refuse in an open drainage, poor sanitation practices contribute to the pollution of natural waterways and water points (e.g. springs, streams, wells), which are sources of water for hand washing and drinking. Consequently, rural-urban migrants are even more vulnerable to experiencing other health outbreaks as they prevent COVID-19.

“Freetown belongs to everyone who has chosen this city as their home. All residents, including migrants, have a role to play in helping our City emerge from this pandemic more equitable, more sustainable, and more prepared for the future. The Mayors Migration Council’s Global Cities Fund is a crucial component to helping all Freetonians reach this goal.” —**Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, Mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone.**

“Mayors continue to adeptly respond and implement solutions that include those who are often left behind or overlooked. We are excited to provide direct access to funding and technical support to local leaders who are working to rebuild their communities in an inclusive way. We hope other international actors will join us in recognizing the benefits of providing cities and their residents with the resources they need to unlock their full potential,” **said Ms. Vittoria Zanuso, Executive Director of the Mayors Migration Council.**

A Selection Committee of subject matter experts and practitioners reviewed submissions and selected Freetown and other city grantees based on their anticipated impact, commitment from city leadership, and likelihood of program’s institutionalization or replication for continued support to migrants, refugees, and IDPs, among other criteria.

The final cities include Barranquilla, Colombia; Beirut, Lebanon; Freetown, Sierra Leone; Lima, Peru; Mexico City, Mexico.

Visit <https://www.mayorsmigrationcouncil.org/gcf> and follow #GlobalCitiesFund on social media for more information on the Global Cities Fund. Contact Anne McPherson (mcpherson.anne@gmail.com) for additional information or press inquiries.

About the Mayors Migration Council

The [Mayors Migration Council](#) (MMC) is a mayor-led advisory organization that helps cities influence national and international policy on migration and refugee issues. The mission is to ensure that global responses both reflect and address realities on the ground for the benefit of newcomers and the communities that receive them.

To fulfill this vision, the MMC works to institutionalize cities' formal access to national, regional, and international policy deliberations; build cities' diplomatic, advocacy, and communications skills so they can effectively shape decisions; unlock and direct resource flows to cities so they can deliver better outcomes on the ground; and help cities implement local solutions efficiently and at scale to accelerate global commitments.

The MMC is led by a Leadership Board composed of the mayors of Amman, Bristol, Freetown, Kampala, Los Angeles, Milan, Montreal, São Paulo, and Zürich, as well as the former mayor of Athens. The MMC operates with the financial support of [Open Society Foundations](#), the [Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation](#), and the [Robert Bosch Stiftung](#), and is managed as a sponsored project of [Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors](#), an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that provides governance and operational infrastructure.