

# INITIATIVE ON URBAN GOVERNANCE FOR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN MEXICO CITY

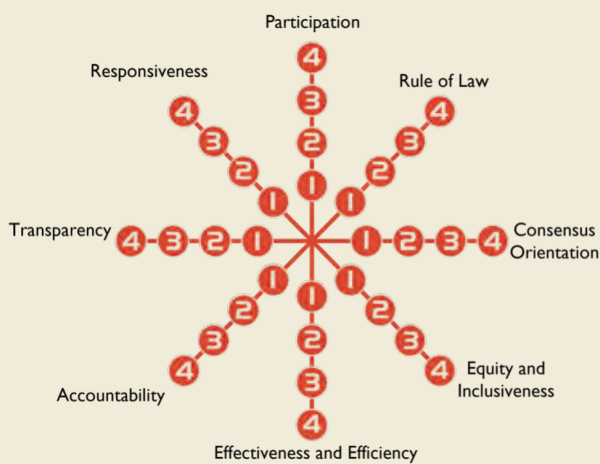


Figure 1. United Nations Development Programme key principles of good governance. Graphic designed by the World Health Organization, Urban Leadership program, based on: United Nations Development Programme. Governance for sustainable human development: a UNDP policy document. New York: UNDP, 1997.

## Introduction

The aim of this brief is to share progress achieved in Mexico City in the implementation of the World Health Organization (WHO) Initiative on Urban Governance for Health and Well-being (UGHW). It presents the context and principles of the global initiative, achievements in Mexico City, and next steps. The target audience of this brief comprises city officials, national governments, and donors.

## Background

Urban governance for health and well-being refers to focused processes of interaction and subsequent decision-making to generate collective solutions to enhance health and well-being through co-creation practices, social change, and institutional engagement as part of whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches.

**Health** is an integral part of **well-being** and **economic** and **social development**. In fact, significant advances in healthy life expectancy in the last century were largely achieved through improvements in social, environmental, and economic conditions.

Urban governance structures offer unique opportunities for social innovation because they:

- Have proximity to and practical knowledge of the needs of the people who are born, live, grow, work, and age in cities;
- Can facilitate interventions through policies from various sectors to improve the health of the entire population with equity and effectiveness;
- Can facilitate community participation in a more effective, fluid manner.

Therefore, it is important to strengthen urban governance for the development of **intersectoral and participatory** policies aimed at promoting health, well-being, and equity.

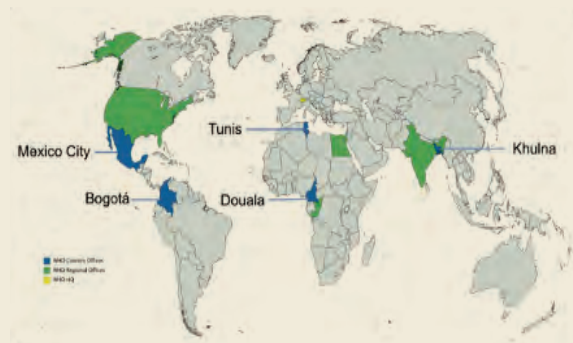


Figure 2. Cities implementing the Initiative on Urban Governance for Health and Well-being. Graphic designed by the World Health Organization, Urban Leadership program. Source: World Health Organization. WHO initiative on urban governance for health and well-being. Geneva: WHO; 2024. Available from: <https://www.who.int/initiatives/urban-governance-for-health-and-well-being>.

## What is the Initiative on Urban Governance for Health and Well-being?

The UGHW initiative, promoted by WHO and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, seeks to support local-level actions to promote **good urban governance for health and well-being** with a special emphasis on community participation. Based on the United Nations Development Programme principles of good governance (see Figure 1), the **goal** of the initiative is to improve the health status and well-being of the population in cities through participatory and intersectoral urban governance by 2028. It is organized into two phases (2020–2024 and 2025–2028) and implemented in five cities globally (see Figure 2).



Mexico City, with a population of 9.2 million, is governed by a Chief of Government elected every six years through popular vote. The city is made up of 16 boroughs (see Figure 3), each with a mayor elected every three years, with the right to be re-elected for a further three.

# MEXICO CITY



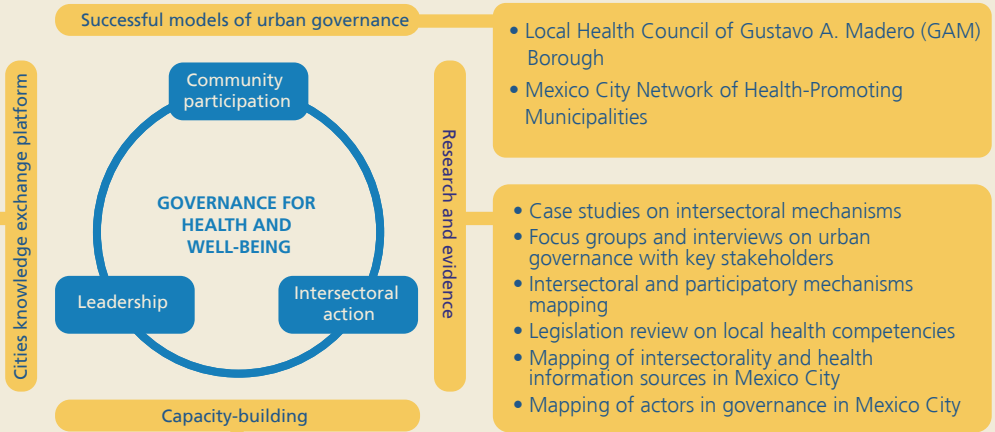
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## First phase: 2020–2024

Following the commitment of the Chief of Government (see Figure 5), an External Advisory Group was formed composed of academics and city secretariats. Using equity criteria – considering the high degree of vulnerability, the quantity of infrastructure in primary healthcare institutions, and the greater availability of community spaces as suitable locations for developing governance practices – Gustavo A. Madero (GAM) was selected as the first borough to implement the initiative. Subsequently, the boroughs of Milpa Alta, Magdalena Contreras, Tláhuac, and Iztacalco have also been incorporated into the initiative. A summary of the results is shown in Figure 4.



- WHO Global City Halls
- Bogotá–Mexico City Urban Lead Exchanges, 2022 and 2023
- Regional Meetings of Mayors on Healthy Municipalities, Cities, and Communities, 2022 and 2023
- Global Mayors Dialogue, 2021 and 2022
- International Conference on Urban Health, 2021 and 2022
- Denver Cities Summit, 2023
- Regional Meeting on Intersectoral Action, 2023



- Local Health Council of Gustavo A. Madero (GAM) Borough
- Mexico City Network of Health-Promoting Municipalities

- Case studies on intersectoral mechanisms
- Focus groups and interviews on urban governance with key stakeholders
- Intersectoral and participatory mechanisms mapping
- Legislation review on local health competencies
- Mapping of intersectorality and health information sources in Mexico City
- Mapping of actors in governance in Mexico City

- 2 Urban Lead cohort trainings with over 25 sessions and more than 25 participants from community leaders and government institutions
- 2 social determinants of health and equity monitoring workshops in Chile and Colombia, 2023
- 1 Inclusive Cities Leadership training – Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
- 1 course “Health equity in chaotic times: old realities, new challenges” – University College London – WHO – University of Lausanne, 2022
- 1 inequalities evaluation online training, 2021

Figure 4. Adapted WHO logical framework for the Initiative on Urban Governance for Health and Well-being in Mexico City

## Stakeholders in Mexico City

- Chief of Government of Mexico City
- Secretariat of Health of Mexico City
- GAM Borough
- Local Health Council of GAM
- Health Jurisdiction of GAM
- Citizen Participation GAM
- Tláhuac Borough
- Milpa Alta Borough
- Magdalena Contreras Borough
- National Institute of Public Health
- Pan American Health Organization

## Creation of a laboratory for the adaptation and implementation of the Regional Criteria of the Healthy Municipalities, Cities, and Communities Movement (HMCC) in Mexico City

A comprehensive and integrative approach was taken to establish a laboratory aimed at adapting and implementing the Regional Criteria of the HMCC in Mexico City. This initiative promotes participation, equity, and intersectorality as key elements of governance for the development of healthier and more sustainable communities in the city.



Figure 5. Letter of commitment signed by the Chief of Government of Mexico City, June 2021

## Success story

One of the participatively established priorities in GAM Borough was addressing gender-based violence. Two notable elements of this action include:

- Mapping of available resources and institutions: conducting a mapping exercise to identify available resources and institutions involved in the prevention and response to gender-based violence. This initiative aims to enhance coordination, increase visibility, and make these resources more accessible to the population.
- Engaging young urban artists: expanding the participatory process by involving young urban artists through a contest focused on the prevention of gender-based violence. This creative approach seeks to raise awareness and contribute to the prevention efforts in a unique and impactful way.

Furthermore, with the support of the Health Secretariat and through the Network of Health-Promoting Boroughs in Mexico City, the boroughs are making progress in their commitment to strengthen urban governance for health and well-being. This will be achieved through the progressive adaptation and implementation of the Regional Criteria of the HMCC in all 16 boroughs.



Representatives of the Mexican Network of Healthy Municipalities and PAHO Mexico. © PAHO

## Main achievements

- Commitment at the highest level to governance for health and well-being has been secured.
- The functioning and governance mechanisms in Bogotá and Mexico City have been made visible and strengthened.
- Health and well-being, viewed through the lens of equity, intersectoral action, and community participation, have been positioned at the center of the political agenda.
- Progress has been made in transitioning from a traditional health model to one based on the social determinants of health.
- Mechanisms of participation and intersectorality, along with their coordination, have been analyzed, systematized, and strengthened.
- Social participation in the policy cycle has been strengthened.



Urban Lead participants of Gustavo A. Madero Borough. © PAHO

## Second phase: 2025–2028

- There will be a focus on continuing to strengthen equity, intersectorality, and community participation in municipal management, incorporating other components of good governance.
- The UGHW initiative will be expanded to cover all 16 boroughs in Mexico City and 20 localities in Bogotá.
- Efforts will continue to advance in shifting the paradigm toward health promotion and social determinants of health in the Americas.
- Contribution to strengthening the HMCC in the Americas will continue through the application of the Regional Criteria of the HMCC.



Signature of letter of commitment in Magdalena Contreras Borough. © PAHO

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