



**STRATEGIC PLAN
2023-27**



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Slum Dwellers International (SDI)

302 Albert Road, Woodstock

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South Africa



FEDERATION SLOGANS

Our federation slogans are our rallying cries for slum dwellers to unite. They are called out in a question-and-answer form in our gatherings from the local to the global level. A selection of the slogans well known across the network are shared below. When you hear these slogans, you know SDI is in the house!

Muongano, Nguvu Yetu!

Unity is power!
(Kenya)

Limba mphawi, limba!

Be strong poor people, be strong!
(Malawi)

Dim dim daya fosa!

Unity is our strength!
(Sierra Leone)

Amandla! Imali Nolwazi!

Power! Is Information and money!
(South Africa)

Moja, nguvu yetu!

Unity is power!
(Tanzania)

Okwegatta, gemyani!

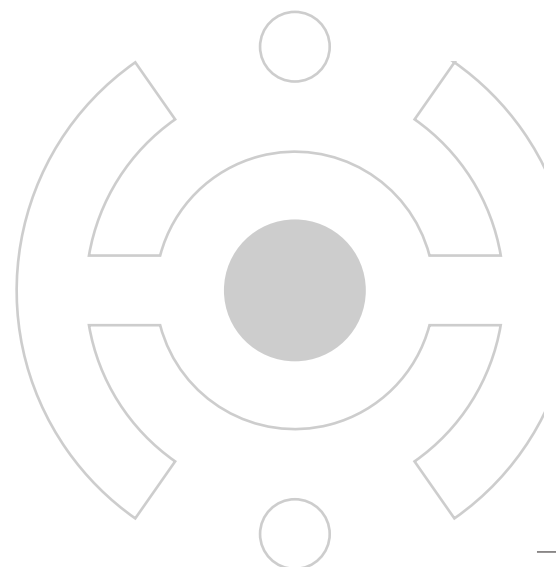
Our unity is our strength!
(Uganda)

Limba ovutika, limba!

Be strong poor people, be strong!
(Zambia)

Masimba imari neruzivo!

Information is power!
(Zimbabwe)



Acknowledgements

First and foremost, the SDI Strategic Plan Steering Committee wishes to thank the slum dweller members of our network for their tireless efforts to create inclusive and resilient cities where the lives of slum dwellers are substantively improved. The slum dwellers and their federations are the heart and soul of the SDI network. We thank them for their leadership of the Strategic Planning process and their robust reflections at the local, regional, and global levels to develop this plan.

We thank the committed professionals in our national support-NGOs, SDI Secretariat, and SDI Board. Your dedication to ensuring slum dweller communities are at the centre of organisational decision-making and practice upholds SDI's unique value proposition and contribution to urban transformation. Your rich contributions to this plan are greatly appreciated.

We thank the following experts for volunteering their time to make contributions to the situational analysis: Billy Cobbett, Julian Baskin, Lucy Earle, Mary Mutinda, Nancy Odendaal, Shuaib Lwasa, Somsook Boonyabancha, and Taibat Lawanson. SDI thanks you for your insights and is eager to continue the conversation with you all as we move into the implementation phase of our Strategic Plan.

Lastly, SDI would like to appreciate its funders and partners from the local to the global level for their continued support of slum dweller-led action. We are eager to strengthen our collaboration in support of the transformative change agenda spelled out in this plan.

Sincerely,

The SDI Strategic Plan Steering Committee

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Preface

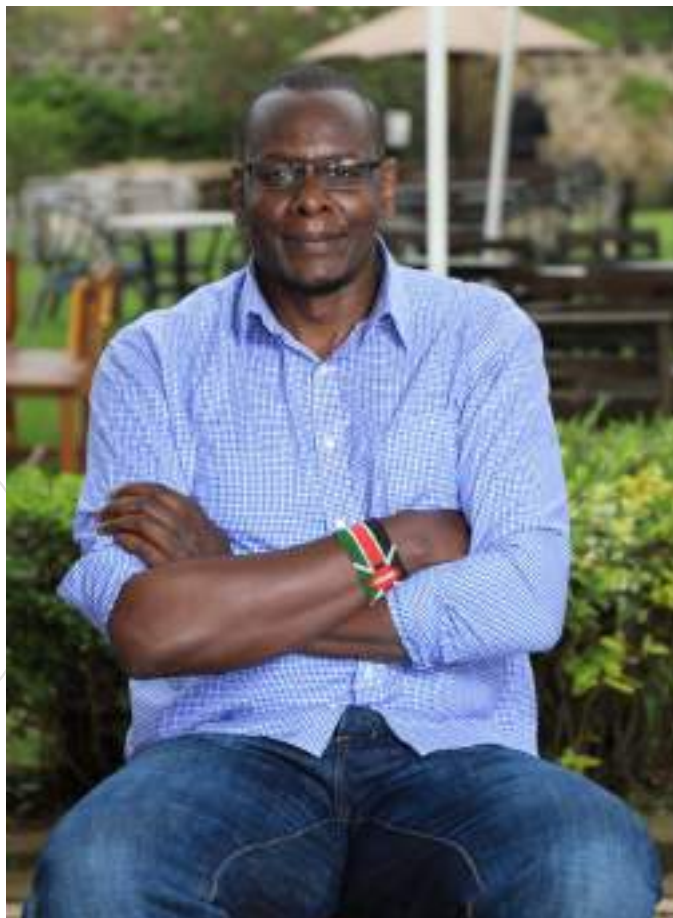
It is my pleasure to present SDI's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan. The period covered by the previous plan was marked by an existential crisis within SDI at a time of immense global uncertainty brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. SDI faced up to its failures, which were a function governance failure and lack of accountability in some sections of the network's structure. We did this in a transparent manner and committed to wide ranging reforms across the network. As we worked to rebuild trust with our partners we have introspected and reformed our governance to increase accountability. We have developed a charter for the network which was developed in a participatory manner and was formally adopted by our Council of Federations in December of 2022. We have changed our legal registration under South African law to increase oversight and elected a Board of Directors that include external professionals to support our Federation leadership on the Board.

As we move into the period of this Strategic Plan we are cognisant of the residual impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our network. As a network we will effectively use the social capital developed by our affiliates to support continued recovery in the slum communities we work in. We will continue to take into account the growing climate change emergencies and its disproportionate impact on our communities. We will seek solutions that enhance not only locally-led adaptation but resilience. Our view of resilience extends beyond the capacity to be agile in the face of climatic challenges and towards a vision where communities of the urban poor flourish as citizens with agency in their own communities and at the global level.

We are cognisant of the growing number of young people in our communities whose future seem bleak. We commit to continuing our work with young people to ensure meaningful inclusion in SDI programmes and processes but also ensure space for them to influence SDI's direction taking into account the context within which our cities are growing. We commit to being intentional about institutional building, addressing contradictions where these may exist in power balances in our community, supporting the capacity of those with fiduciary responsibility of the network structures to discharge their duties effectively.

We are grateful to all our partners who continue to walk with us on this journey.

Thank you



Joseph Muturi
Chair of the SDI Board

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Introduction

1.1 Who are we?

We are Slum Dwellers International (SDI), a global network anchored by a transnational poor people's movement striving to create inclusive and resilient cities where the lives of slum dwellers are substantively improved. Our network is committed to social justice and prides itself on a staunch commitment to community-led, systemic impact through the pursuit of citywide slum upgrading strategies that increase access to improved housing, essential services, economic livelihoods, and secure tenure for the world's one billion slum dwellers. By improving the lives of slum dwellers – who constitute the overwhelming majority of the urban population in cities of the Global South – our network improves development outcomes for the city as a whole and ensures cities contribute to the advancement of global commitments to protect people and planet.

The SDI network comprises national slum dweller federations from throughout the Global South, their national support-NGOs, and a global Secretariat based in Cape Town, South Africa. We are governed by the SDI Council of Federations and the SDI Board of Directors, whose membership must include at least 50 percent slum dwellers. Our organisational model is designed to enable authentic community-led development at local, city, national and global scale that is rooted in local knowledge and a commitment to local impact. From the local to the global level our network amplifies the voices of slum dwellers and ensures their participation in platforms where they drive shifts in policy, practice, and resource flows towards greater inclusivity and sustained local impact.

Our slum dweller federations bring together hundreds of saving groups networked at the settlement, city, and national levels to form country-level social movements that drive a pro-poor urban change agenda. Savings groups offer supportive spaces for women to develop leadership capacities and become active and trusted local organisers. By design, these women go on to become the drivers of our movement and our strategies for women-led urban transformation rooted in communal priorities. Federations use shared organising rituals such as savings, peer-to-peer exchange, community-led slum profiling, enumeration, and mapping to ensure data informed slum upgrading and facilitate community mobilisation. Organising a critical mass of slum dweller communities, these strategies anchor efforts to improve lives and livelihoods through processes undertaken and driven by slum dwellers themselves. At the international level our network brings national slum dweller federations together to form a global movement, united by core values, shared community organising methodologies, and a collective vision and strategy for impact.

1.2 What is our value proposition?

Our unique contribution to the urban development sector centres upon the global social movement of slum dwellers that drives our network. This social movement ensures slum dweller communities take the lead in establishing development priorities and strategies and for driving and measuring impact. In a sector dominated by professionals, our network enables slum dwellers across the Global South to engage meaningfully, from the local to the global level, in advancing pro-poor policy, practice, and impact. Our network delivers truly community-led development, moving beyond dominant community participation models that do little to address power imbalances or contribute to systemic or sustainable change. We do so by organising communities into social movements with their own agendas and the critical mass required to ensure slum dwellers are recognised as change agents, rather than simply the beneficiaries of, or participants in, projects and programmes determined by others. SDI supports slum dweller communities to shift power asymmetries that exclude the vulnerable from shaping their own destinies and fulfilling their enormous potential as essential urban development stakeholders. Our network's deep roots and strong relationships in local slum dweller communities and cities ensure our contextual credibility and substantiate our legitimacy as a global movement.



Methodology

Authentic community-led development requires communities be involved in all levels of design and implementation, and have direct and explicit input into strategic planning. Too often, development actors engage communities once strategy and programmes have already been determined, resulting in little more than tokenistic community participation in interventions. The methodology described below details our approach to community-led strategic planning and is presented to show the legitimacy of our plan and contribute to wider learning about the mechanisms, time, and resources required to enable meaningful community-led practice.

2.1 Why do we need a Strategic Plan?

We understand that our network must be crystal clear about the change we seek in order to ensure that we channel our resources and energies in accordance with the priorities of slum dwellers within the SDI network and effectively action our commitment to making tangible change at the local level. We produced a Strategic Plan to articulate consensus in the network about the change we seek and how we will make it happen. Our plan describes who we are and what we stand for and will ensure our network's decision-making is impact-oriented and strategically coherent from the local to the global level. The Strategic Plan is a representation of a robust, community-centred strategic planning process, designed to ensure the network's agenda is represented as an aggregation and synthesis of local priorities and collective agreements. This will ultimately maximise impact and present a framework through which we hold ourselves accountable in the coming years.

2.2 How did we come up with our Strategic Plan?

Building on our network's rich history and core values, the methodology deployed for developing a Strategic Plan sought to maximise dialogue and collective reflection by – first and foremost – slum dwellers themselves. Our *raison d'être* is to build the voice and agency of slum dwellers and it was imperative that this voice be central to the entire strategic planning process. Professionals from our support-NGOs and Secretariat have played a key role in creating spaces for this dialogue and reflection and have contributed critical insights as partners to the federations.

2.2.1 We established an SDI Strategic Plan Steering Committee

First, we established an SDI Strategic Plan Steering Committee comprising slum dweller leaders from the Coordinating Team and representatives from the Board and Secretariat. The committee had equal representation of males and females. The committee was responsible for shaping and approving the strategic planning methodology; approving the Internal Review, new Theory of Change, and new Strategic Plan; and convening and facilitating dialogues from the local to the global level to maximise network participation in the process.

2.2.2 We undertook an Internal Review of the past five years

To ground our Strategic Planning process, it was necessary to begin with a collective review of outcomes-level change and implementation lessons registered during the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan period. The Internal Review was kick-started by a set of structured national dialogues at the affiliate-level, which fed into regional and global dialogues to consolidate review findings and use these to inform forward planning. (Annex 1: Internal Review)

2.2.3 We convened national dialogues

The first step in the Internal Review process was the convening of national dialogues. An online survey was developed and shared with our affiliates. The survey asked affiliates to rank progress made towards

each of the outcomes in SDI's Theory of Change over the past five years and to substantiate their answers with concrete examples. In addition, the survey asked affiliates to rank progress towards the organisational development and institutional strengthening aspirations articulated in our last Strategic Plan and to substantiate these rankings with examples. Affiliates were further asked to reflect on the current and intended future state of Urban Poor Funds, types of capital built in the past five years, and any unintended outcomes registered. Lastly affiliates were asked to propose any changes to the Theory of Change based on federation priorities, shifting national and global realities, areas in which they feel they have a comparative advantage, and areas their data reveals itself to be most pertinent to slum dwellers.

Affiliates were asked to convene a meeting with a team of federation leaders and key NGO staff to complete the survey. They were urged to ensure gender and youth balance in the team selected and to ensure there were at least as many federation members as staff on the team. Furthermore, affiliates were encouraged to dedicate a full day to a dialogue anchored by the survey in order to ensure the answers reflected rich discussions and national consensus.

2.2.4 We convened a Secretariat workshop

As the affiliates convened national reflections, the Secretariat convened a workshop to reflect upon the same. The meeting commenced with a deep dive into the existing SDI Theory of Change and Strategic Plan led by the Secretariat Director. The meeting proceeded to assess:

- Change registered in the last five years along each of the pathways of change
- Change registered in the last five years at the level of organisational development
- The role of the Secretariat
- Organisational risks

2.2.5 We convened a strategic discussion with the Board of Directors

SDI's Board of Directors was convened for an extraordinary meeting to consider the organisation's operating model, sustainability measures and opportunities to scale the development priorities identified in the Strategic Plan. The participatory dialogue reflected on opportunities to leverage strategic advantages, including proposed ways SDI can deepen and employ the network's assets, particularly the movement's social, human and political capital, and harness new opportunities to execute change at scale.

2.2.6 We convened regional dialogues

SDI Regional hub meetings were convened to consolidate findings from each national dialogue and generate key hub-level insights and recommendations to inform the global dialogue. Regional hubs were asked to select one federation leader and one NGO staff member to co-facilitate each section as guided by the Hub Facilitation Guide. The guide supported Regional hubs to generate average scores for perceived change against each of the settlement and city level outcomes and to analyse areas of greatest and least impact. They were further guided to explore the strategies that have proven most effective in bringing about change and whether there were differences in opinion about priority areas in the Hub. Average scores for perceived change against the last Strategic Plan's organisational development aspirations were also recorded and the hubs were asked to analyse existing and desired future impact accordingly. A simple table to brainstorm what SDI should do more/do



less of was added to the end of the facilitation guide in order to promote less structured reflections about what affiliates think has worked and where there have been gaps over the past five years.

2.2.7 We developed a participatory global situational analysis

We took a unique approach to preparing a situational analysis for our Strategic Plan in order to support our network to understand global trends and their impact on our work. SDI's core values have always prioritised local knowledge – particularly that of slum dweller communities – understanding that those closest to the problems understand them best and must play a key role in formulating and implementing solutions. Keenly aware that knowledge is power, SDI is firmly in support of the movement to decolonise knowledge and development practice by elevating local ways of knowing, thinking, doing and valuing collective-intelligence. For that reason, we prioritised working with academics from the Global South and ensuring their inputs were reflected upon by our global network of slum dwellers to inform strategic choices.

Methodologically, we decided to use the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2022 (GRR) to select key global risks and trends relevant to slum dwellers. We also identified other priority areas based on our Internal Review of the last Strategic Planning period.

We selected seven key issues and posed three questions for each topic which we presented to academics and experts selected by the SDI Strategic Planning Committee to help us better understand the challenges and opportunities posed by the global context. The academics/experts prepared position papers on the select topics, guided by the three key questions. These papers fed a full day of strategic breakout groups at the SDI Council where slum dwellers reflected upon their collective strategy for addressing the global forces impacting their local realities.

2.2.8 We convened a global dialogue

SDI's Council of Federations meeting was convened in order to facilitate the global dialogue. Here, data gathered from the national and regional dialogues was presented and packaged to inform four days of structured reflection concluding the internal review process and putting the findings to use in formulating Council resolutions regarding updates to the SDI Theory of Change and fundamental elements of the Strategic Plan 2023-2027. A detailed Breakout Groups Facilitation Guide was prepared to summarise key insights from the national and regional dialogues as well as the situational analysis papers. The Guide presented a set of key questions to elicit Council resolutions.

In the photo Jockin Arputham, co-founder and late President of SDI, with federation members in Nairobi, Kenya. (PHOTO - Slum Dwellers International)



Global Situational Analysis

3.1 What's going on in the world?

A robust situational analysis was required to guide our policy and operational responses. As mentioned in 2.2.6 we took a unique approach to preparing a situational analysis, engaging academics and experts from the Global South to analyse key global risks and feeding their insights into a situational analysis reflection by slum dweller federations and support professionals at the SDI Council.

The global context has shifted quite dramatically since SDI's last Strategic Plan. A great many shifts have, of course, resulted from the global Covid-19 pandemic. Aside from the devastating impact on global health, the crisis and associated lockdowns created severe economic and societal consequences, with slum dwellers in the Global South among the most heavily impacted. Over 50 million more people are estimated to live in extreme poverty compared to the pre-pandemic period, increasing inequality, polarisation and resentment within and between societies. Economic and societal hardships were further exacerbated by the onset of the war in Ukraine, which resulted in the rapid rise of fuel and food costs and inflation. These unforeseen shocks have amplified the global risks reflected upon by the network, compounding the vulnerabilities of the world's one billion slum dwellers and the cities in which they live.

Our situational analysis begins with a reflection on the state of urban informality and inequality and the lack of city transformation that exacerbates and entrenches the status quo. It then proceeds to explore the linkages between these risks and the following major global risks: climate action failure; social cohesion erosion; livelihood crisis; migration and refugees; digital inequality; and forced evictions.

3.2 Key global risks and implications

3.2.1 Urban informality and inequality is rapidly expanding in cities of the Global South – with wide-ranging implications for the wider global community. By 2050 the world will host 2.2 billion new urban residents, with majority expected to reside in Africa and Asia. A staggering 2 billion of these additional urban residents will reside in slums if current policies and practices remain unchanged. This is creating increasingly unequal cities where informality is the norm rather than the exception. Urban informality and urban inequality are multidimensional and manifest not only in differential income but also differential access to urban infrastructure, education, basic health, public space, governance structures, climate change burden among others. Locked out of the formal system, slum dwellers are beholden to cartel-like organised informal vendors who are often exploitative in the price charged and quality provided. This phenomenon is referred to as the “poverty penalty” whereby the poor pay more for essential services of far lower quality than wealthier urban households in the same city, widening inequality and trapping slum dwellers in a downward cycle of poverty. Policy makers are beginning to awaken to the reality of the fallacy of using a western boilerplate policy approach to the development of cities in the Global South where informality is the norm, not the exception. Slowly, the primacy of local knowledge in effectively understanding and responding to the complex multidimensional nature of urban informality and inequality is being recognised. Informal settlement upgrading is recognised as a key solution for addressing the risks associated with informality and inequality but is failing to be implemented at meaningful scale.

Our discussions at the SDI Council revealed a continued commitment to the pursuit of city-wide slum upgrading as the animating anchor of our strategy and approach to bringing about transformational change across a host of strategic outcomes. The network reflected upon strong precedents set by the network in the past 5 years, most notably the Mukuru Special Planning Area in Kenya. This effort showed the impact of multisectoral upgrading consortia, data-driven slum planning, and robust

partnership with city authorities to ensure policy and budgetary support to scalable action. The network will step up efforts to produce evidence on the poverty penalty as part of data-driven advocacy efforts to promote alternatives that uphold the rights of slum dwellers as urban citizens and free up significant resources for slum communities to redirect to more productive investments. Lastly, the network's global advocacy efforts will escalate pressure on development decision makers to appreciate the sheer scale of urban informality and the pivotal ways it intersects with global development risks and ambitions.

3.2.2 Lack of city transformation is resulting in underperforming cities where urban degeneration is worsening, multi-generational poverty is rampant – impacting girls and women the most – and national and global goals are not delivered. This reality is a consequence of multiple local governments failures: lack of capacity and neither planning for, nor welcoming, urban growth; making little/no provision for land, services, and citizenship for slum dwellers; the pursuit of sectoral, project-based urban development; and failure to integrate slums into city planning and the mainstream political economy. With few exceptions, such settlements are tolerated rather than developed. Local authorities may bring a level of formality to the settlement through administrative recognition, and – in some cases – the gradual extension of public services, but normally at the level of pit latrines and stand pipes that would never be accepted in the other parts of the city. This status quo is, in fact, holding back the whole city. By not incorporating slums and slum dwellers into the city itself, the city fails to capture the human capital of the urban majority: perpetuates extreme land use inefficiency, contributes to widespread environmental degradation, and entrenches poverty that limits the growth and security of the city as a whole.

Our discussions at the SDI Council revealed a need to strengthen advocacy that explicitly frames slum issues as city issues – not a separate agenda. Governments and the public must understand that issues faced by slum dwellers ultimately hold back the prosperity and resilience of a city as a whole. The network notes that greater recognition for this fact is required to ensure city budgets support city-wide slum upgrading and many of the progressive policies that already exist. SDI and its partners must be strategic about an approach to advocacy that moves cities beyond disjointed project-based interventions, but doesn't get trapped in endless cycles of research, policy development and revision. SDI federations will seek to learn from and replicate existing network strategies for understanding and influencing city budgets – especially strategies anchored by SDI's data – and will explore avenues for expanding policy influence to critical spheres such as health and education where slum dwellers are overwhelmingly excluded from the rights citizens in formal parts of the city enjoy.

3.2.3 Climate action failure was listed as the number one most severe global risk over the next 10 years by the GRR 2022. The report's analysis points to a lack of coordinated climate action and a failure to plan for inclusive transitions as posing significant risk. In cities of the Global South, climate change impacts are heightened by deeply rooted vulnerabilities. Pressing primary climate risks to cities in the global south include: heatwaves; extreme rainfall and storms (leading to secondary impacts like flooding, heat related health complications, reduced potable water, poor air quality, landslides, flooding, extreme cold, storm surges, saltwater intrusion and coastal erosion). Despite the time and resources invested in dialogues, meetings, drawing road maps and convening debates, action is still far short of what is needed to avert climate catastrophe. In addition, continued reliance on top-down climate action planning and finance reinforces inequalities – failing to capitalise on local innovations that have demonstrated potential to generate employment, ensure local ownership, and effectively mitigate and adapt to climate change. There is a need for increased appreciation of local knowledge to enable comprehensive climate risk assessment from the perspective of people on the frontlines of climate impacts and their increased participa-



tion in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of climate action. Our discussions at the SDI Council revealed federations are highly cognisant of the climate risks facing their cities and settlements. Most are already engaged in climate action of some sort and have worked to shape policy and practice at city-level – resulting in concrete gains in many affiliates. The network agreed climate change action must be a key priority of the new Strategic Plan and that SDI should work to popularise city-wide slum upgrading as an essential climate change intervention, while also supporting widespread community-led micro initiatives at settlement-level. Additionally, the network agreed to enhance its collection of data (hard and soft) to advocate for and measure the impact of climate action in slum settlements.

3.2.4 Social cohesion erosion was ranked the 4th most severe risk over the next 10 years by the GRR 2022. It was noted that this risk worsened most since the onset of the pandemic owing to the 51 million additional people pushed into extreme poverty as a consequence of the crisis. Closely linked to this threat is the risk of widespread youth disillusionment which featured prominently in both this and last year’s risk reports. Youth disillusionment is described as the young generation’s “disengagement and lack of confidence and/or loss of trust with existing economic, political, and social structures at a global scale.” Social cohesion erosion and associated increases in youth disillusionment negatively impact socio-political stability, public health and safety, and the economic productivity of slum communities and cities at large. The exclusion of social development considerations in urban planning and city development policy has contributed to continuing urban social erosion, particularly in slum communities. Policy and practice must intentionally foster cohesion and creatively facilitate social linkages within and between urban communities that incentivise active citizenship. Bonded slum dweller community groups create strong forces for driving and sustaining social change- for themselves and cities as a whole. The youth play a critical role in evolving mechanisms for building social cohesion that are responsive to the demands of modern times. Dialogue between youth and the wider community is required to preserve historical and cultural wisdom.

Our discussions at the SDI Council revealed strong awareness for deteriorating social cohesion in slum communities and its impacts. While the terminology was unfamiliar to many, the concept was well understood along with SDI’s unique value proposition in this area. The savings groups and federations of SDI promote collective support, strength, action, and influence in all that they do. The central role of women and, more recently, youth has been intentionally prioritised in recognition of the impacts of falling social cohesion on these populations most especially. The network agreed that its movement-building approach and its support to livelihoods are key drivers of increased social cohesion and this fact should be communicated more explicitly to urban decision makers and partners so that they understand the impact SDI makes to mitigate this growing global risk. Lastly, the network agreed it must devote more attention to the mental health of slum dweller communities in order to combat social cohesion erosion.

3.2.5 Livelihood crisis was ranked the 5th most severe risk over the next 10 years by the GRR 2022 and the most immediate national threat in 97 of the countries surveyed. The report characterises the crisis as the structural deterioration of work prospects and/or standards for the working-age population; unemployment; underemployment; lower wages; fragile contracts; erosion of worker rights etc. In cities of the Global South, informal employment - including self-employment in informal enterprises and wage employment in informal jobs - accounts for the overwhelming bulk of slum dweller livelihoods. Most cities fail to recognise or acknowledge that informal economic activities anchor the urban economy, supplying goods and services to the formal economy and enabling its growth. Despite their contribution to slum dweller and city well-being, informal livelihoods are constrained by locational challenges (including evictions, inadequate access to basic services, and distance to formal markets), a lack of targeted capacity-building and financial instruments to support informal employment and enterprise, as well as city policies that criminalise informality. Cultural issues limiting opportunities for girls/young women (access to education, pressure to marry) further exacerbate the livelihood challenges facing slum dwellers. Interventions that start with understanding informal markets and the livelihoods slum dwellers want to pursue work best. Mentorship has

proven highly effective for creating livelihood opportunities for slum dweller youth and technology is opening up many new pathways to impact in this arena.

Our discussions at the SDI Council revealed strong consensus that slum communities were exceptionally hard hit by the livelihood impacts of the Covid crisis and that demand for support to livelihoods is at an all-time high amongst slum communities. The network understands that this issue is of particular concern to youth and seeks more support to expand existing efforts to support slum dweller enterprises – anchored by savings groups and cooperatives, peer support, pro-poor finance (including, but not limited to our Urban Poor Funds) and community-generated evidence of successful interventions in the informal sector. The networked agreed to continue advocating for the rights of informal vendors and workers and build greater awareness for the role they play in growing the urban economy. As part of this Strategic Plan, SDI will innovate and partner with thought leaders who can enhance our impact in this critical area.

3.2.6 Migration and refugees was ranked by the GRR 2022 among the key areas where current global risk mitigation efforts fall short of the challenge. Involuntary migration is at an all-time high, driven by conflict, discrimination, persecution, climate change, natural and human-made disasters. Economic migration – linked to the livelihood crisis outlined above – is further swelling refugee numbers. Data on urban migrants and refugees in cities of the Global South is extremely scant and unreliable, obfuscating the true nature of the crisis and priority responses. While it is true that not all refugees, IDPs and migrants are poor, those who lost everything during flight, who have depleted their savings, or who struggle to maintain a stable livelihood (because they lack papers, the right to work and/or legal residence), will end up living in informal settlements where rents are cheapest. In such settlements, they frequently face exploitation and suffer from the same lack of basic services as host communities. In most parts of the world, refugees and IDPs living in urban areas do not receive any humanitarian assistance and international donors are yet to channel funding to municipal governments for the necessary place-based upgrading to improve lives and livelihoods. In this way, urban migrants and refugees share the same agenda as slum dwelling nationals, which should inform efforts to build solidarity and collective action.

Our discussions at the SDI Council revealed strong awareness for the increasing presence of migrants and refugees in informal settlements and varying degrees of engagement with this population. Those federations already engaging refugees and migrants typically do so through the usual federation mobilising rituals, rather than through standalone projects or programmes. In this way, migrants and refugees are treated like any other slum dwelling resident. In general, this is the approach the network supports, ie. reaching out to urban migrants and refugees to share the SDI agenda and approach, encouraging them to explore how it might support their needs, and inviting them join or start savings groups and take part in local interventions. During SDI’s slum and city-wide profiling and enumeration, the network will ensure these populations are represented in our data and that their distinct priorities and challenges are captured. Where their priorities overlap with those of the wider community, SDI will support collective action to build unity and inclusion and address whole-community needs.

3.2.7 Digital inequality is said, in the GRR 2022, to be an imminent threat to the world as 3 billion people remain offline. The report notes that “digital trust is the currency that facilitates future innovation and prosperity” and uses the term “digital everything” to convey the world’s growing dependency on digital systems and data. For slum dwellers, who have long been entirely absent or misrepresented in city data, data-driven urban planning elicits fears of deepening inequity in the realisation of city development outcomes and further exclusion of slum dwellers from urban decision-making. Public trust in the digital systems used for planning is crucial less the distrust between societies and government widen even further – exacerbating disenfranchisement and urban instability. In recent years, the “smart city” narrative has captivated governments, property speculators, and engineering and tech multinational corporations. In the Global South this narrative has concentrated on anticipating supposed urban opportunities, rather than the essential problem solving required to transform highly unequal cities, where the



majority live without basic services and essential infrastructure. The marketing discourse that characterises the “smart city” narrative overrides any attempt at stakeholder needs analysis and technology is promoted as possessing the agency to affect systemic change.

Our discussions at the SDI Council focused on the need for further investment in SDI’s Know Youth City offering – to ensure slum dwellers drive a process for ensuring they are represented in the city data used for decision-making. By collecting data themselves, slum dwellers have trust in the data; ensure what matters to them is captured; create skills, livelihoods, social cohesion and active citizenry; as well as the political capital required to engage decision makers and ensure the data feeds city planning and a full understanding of the political economy. The network will double down on efforts to partner with local governments and their associations to institutionalise inclusive data-driven city-wide planning, where slums are recognised as part and parcel of the city. Putting slum dweller youth at the centre of digital innovation linked to SDI’s hard data and rich stories, will ensure they are not left behind in the digital revolution that will shape their futures.

3.2.8 Forced evictions have made a resurgence in cities throughout the Global South. Governments and city authorities typically justify the eviction of “squatters” from public and private land by linking their removal to make necessary urban infrastructure such as new roads, drains, electricity and water supply. The network has also seen an increase in evictions justified in terms of addressing climate related challenges such as rising sea levels. Sometimes these justifications are genuine and at other times a guise for seizing land for private interests. Regardless, forced evictions (as opposed to negotiated resettlement) are often violent, traumatic, and leave hundreds or

thousands of slum dwellers homeless and destitute – far from the livelihoods, social networks, and schools their families depended upon. Despite the illegality of forced eviction, slum communities rarely have access to legal or other remedies. No global institutions are doing the global advocacy backed by data that is required to successfully campaign against forced evictions. Advocacy based on the promotion of eviction alternatives that truly serve slum dwellers is severely lacking. At the heart of forced evictions is a technocratic planning approach that seldom involves slum dwellers in any meaningful way. It is important that city planning becomes more participatory, actively engaging stakeholders in finding workable win-win solutions.

Our discussions at the SDI Council revealed many federations thought they had won the battle against forced evictions years ago, after successfully contributing to shifts in national and global policy related to evictions and resettlement. Regrettably, these policies have failed to prevent forced evictions in recent years and the network has prioritised addressing this risk in the current Strategic Plan. The network agreed it has the potential and the mandate to lead local and global data-backed advocacy in this space and to deploy its tools, experience, and partnerships to finding win-win city-wide solutions that advance rather than undermine global and city development goals. We agreed to explore real-time eviction monitoring using our KYC Platform and the creative talents and innovations of the youth to amplify this issue and demand greater accountability from governments, generate greater public support for ending forced eviction, share success stories of win-win agreements, and attract more attention and support from the development sector.



Strategy Theory 2023 - 2027

4.1 What is Theory Of Change?

Based upon our extensive reflection on the global context, our community-led internal review of SDI's impact over the past five years, and the set of strategic dialogues described in the methodology, the SDI network agreed on a set of adaptations to our Theory of Change. SDI's agenda seeks long-term systemic change and, as such, it is not radically revised within a five-year time span. Instead, it is refined and adapted based upon evolving collective learning about the impact sought by slum dwellers and the most effective strategies for making the required change.

The Theory of Change presents a high-level articulation of the outcomes we are working towards; what this change looks like in the minds of slum dwellers; and key actions we will take to bring about the change. As such, our Theory of Change can be seen as the Strategic Plan in a nutshell and the North Star guiding our actions, investments, and accountabilities.

For the sake of conceptual clarity, the pathways are presented as distinct - each with their own set of outcomes. In reality, we were deliberate about ensuring these pathways overlap, intersect, and mutually reinforce each other. Together the four pathways offer a strategically coherent programme where each component contributes to the network's overall intended impact.

The SDI Theory of Change 2023-2027 presented below is depicted in the A3 poster in the centre of the print version of this Strategic Plan.



SDI Theory of Change 2023-2027

Overall impact: The creation of inclusive and resilient cities where the lives of slum dwellers are substantively improved.

	WHAT SDI DOES	WHAT CHANGE LOOKS LIKE	OUTCOMES
SETTLEMENT	<p>We organise women-led and youth-led savings groups and network them into federations at settlement level</p> <p>We integrate youth within all our programs and support KYC TV</p> <p>We profile, enumerate, and map our settlements and convene settlement for a where our data informs participatory planning</p> <p>We assist slum communities to secure tenure and prevent forced evictions</p> <p>We support livelihood-building through skills development, enterprise financing, peer support, and advocacy for informal workers</p> <p>We capacitate slum dwellers to understand climate change and other urban crises and to generate solutions for adaptation</p> <p>We drive locally-led slum upgrading to improve access to essential services</p>	<p>We see slum settlements that are recognised by the city and integrated into city planning and budgeting . We see an end to forced evictions and upgraded slum settlements with secure tenure, universal access to essential services, including health and education, improved housing and public amenities. We see safe and healthy communities where physical and mental health, and protection from violence are prioritised. We see communities in slum settlements with widespread access to economic livelihood opportunities and pro-poor credit. We see organised communities exhibiting strong social cohesion and youth filled with opportunity and hope. We see communities where people with disabilities, urban migrants, refugees and other marginalised groups fully integrated within the community. We see resilient communities spearheading locally-led citywide climate action and co-producing settlement upgrading plans that improve the lives of slum dwellers and all citizens.</p>	<p>1.1 Improved access to essential services in slum settlements</p> <p>1.2 Enhanced economic livelihoods amongst slum dwellers</p> <p>1.3 Improved climate change adaptation, both in slum settlements and in city</p> <p>1.4 Greater strategic influence of slum dwellers</p> <p>1.5 Improved social cohesion in slum settlements</p>
CITY / NATIONAL	<p>We network savings groups at the city-level and into national federations</p> <p>We produce city-wide data and youth media on informal settlements and convene city for a where our data informs participatory planning</p> <p>We capacitate communities to understand and influence city policy frameworks and budgets</p> <p>We support peer-to-peer exchanges between slum dwellers and officials, within and between different cities</p> <p>We co-design and implement climate-friendly slum upgrading and housing projects and advocate for universal access to essential services</p> <p>We establish Urban Poor Funds offering pro-poor finance for slum upgrading, livelihoods and climate action</p> <p>We work to end forced evictions and advocate for equitable city land access and management</p>	<p>We see networks of cities where development is inclusive and resilient. We see slum communities led by women and youth, driving city-wide change. We see urban decision makers recognising and valuing the skills, knowledge, and data of organised slum dweller communities. We see effective and sustained collaboration and partnership between slum dwellers and government shaping equitable urban policy, practice, and public investment. We see an end to forced evictions and city-wide equitable land management systems anchoring city-wide programs to improve housing, infrastructure, services, and livelihoods for slum dwellers. We see locally-led climate action, including slum upgrading, supported by innovative pro-poor finance instruments. We see cities that recognise that the resilience of the formal and informal parts of the city are interdependent.</p>	<p>2.1 Strengthened collaboration between slum dwellers and government in the planning and implementation of citywide development</p> <p>2.2 Increased pro-poor and citywide data driven development</p> <p>2.3 More equitable city and national policy frameworks and budgets recognise the priorities of slum dwellers</p> <p>2.4 Improved quality of life for slum dwellers underpinned by an end to forced eviction</p> <p>2.5 Improved and affordable access to essential services, including health and education;</p> <p>2.6 Expanded pro-poor finance and resource flows support the implementation of locally-led climate action, including slum upgrading</p>





GLOBAL

We network national slum dweller federations at the global-level as part of the SDI movement

We participate in strategic regional and global fora to influence pro-poor policy and resource flows

We mentor and capacitate slum dwellers to influence regional and global decision-making

We support international peer-to-peer exchange to upscale pro-poor development approaches and build a global movement

We promote the Know Your City Campaign, to amplify the data and voices of slum dwellers and inform and monitor development agendas and commitments

We create our own global fora and campaigns to advance the SDI agenda and build alliances with partners who share our vision

We see a highly recognisable and respected transnational movement of slum dwellers that is well organised and influential in centering slum dweller priorities in global debates. We see a world where organised slum dweller communities are considered valued partners in global urban development decision-making and where investment in locally-led inclusive and resilient urban development is understood to be essential to the health of our species and planet. We see a world where slum dweller data, stories, and voices shape greater understanding of the urban majority in the Global South and greater commitment to their well-being. We see global decision-makers exhibit an increased capacity to integrate community driven knowledge and development methodologies into development policy and programming.

3.1 Global development policy and programming is more pro-poor as a result of institutionalised collaboration with slum dwellers

3.2 SDI's global engagements and partnerships demonstrate increased local impact

3.3 Increased amplification of slum dweller data, stories, and voices underpins advocacy for advancement of SDI's prioritised outcomes

3.4 Increased global finance flows for locally-led, pro-poor urban development

Enabling pathway: To enable the SDI network to effectively and accountably drive settlement, city/country, and global transformation, we invest in the organisational development of our movement and professional support structures.

ORGANISATIONAL

We convene regional hubs and a global council to ensure slum dwellers lead our network

We support peer-to-peer accountability and learning, anchored by savings group methodologies, at all levels of the network

We support peer-to-peer exchanges on organisational development

We prioritise federation strengthening to ensure the movement drives impact

We build the capacity of professionals to support federations to: advance financial sustainability; grow and manage UPFs; amplify slum dweller data, stories, and voice; support community-led impact and LME

We create spaces for innovation to improve our impact

We continually invest in strengthening network governance to ensure a culture of integrity, accountability, transparency, and compliance

We see a strong women-led transnational movement of slum dwellers driving tangible change for slum dwellers in the Global South. We see an SDI network capacitated to advance the prioritised outcomes of the SDI network in a financially sustainable, accountable, politically relevant and technically capable manner – keeping slum dwellers at the center of planning, implementation, learning, monitoring and evaluation. We see a network exemplifying a culture of integrity from the savings group level to the Board that is anchored by clear roles and responsibilities, peer-to-peer accountability and a shared vision. We see effective succession planning in the network evidenced by a second-tier of community leaders and professionals in key leadership roles. We see a new generation of network members encouraging innovation for greater community-led impact.

4.1 Strengthened participatory governance from the savings group to the SDI Board

4.2 Improved technical support to federations (from support NGOs and Secretariat)

4.3 Improved evidence of impact generated by community-led LME

4.4 Second-tier federation and professional leadership increasingly drive impact

4.5 Innovation supports enhanced achievement of SDI's Strategic Plan and organisational relevance

Note: The SDI network's programmatic and enabling pathways are interdependent and together drive our overall intended impact. For conceptual clarity they are presented in our TOC as distinct pathways with their own outcomes. We recognise the many ways these overlap, intersect, and mutually reinforce each other.



4.2 Understanding our Theory of Change (TOC)

In this section we breakdown some key assumptions and definitions essential to understanding our TOC and the strategy it underpins.

4.2.1 Our overall intended impact

This is the ultimate change SDI seeks. By advancing each of the outcomes in the TOC, SDI will support the creation of inclusive and resilient cities where the lives of slum dwellers are substantively improved. We understand that citywide change is essential to meaningfully improve the inclusivity and resilience of cities in the Global South. When we speak of urban resilience we speak of the multi-dimensional capacities and systems required for cities to resist and recover from adverse social, political, economic, and environmental shocks and stressors in a manner that supports inclusive and sustainable prosperity. Urban resilience in the Global South is fundamentally impossible without addressing the vulnerability of slum dwellers. Lastly, substantial improvement in the lives of slum dwellers is the essential metric and only acceptable measure of inclusive and resilient city policy and practice.

4.2.2 Our pathways to impact

To create inclusive and resilient cities where the lives of slum dwellers are substantively improved, our network must pursue citywide impact through action at multiple levels.

At the **settlement level**, SDI federations organise and build representative movements that can sustain action over the long-haul; they generate collective knowledge and strategy for how to make change; and they take initiative and drive local action to improve the lives and livelihoods of their communities. Settlement-level action is essential for informing, implementing, and ensuring the accountability of citywide change efforts. Sustainable and impactful social movements aren't built upon the capacities and charms of a handful of leaders at the top, but by the energies and actions of an organised critical mass at the base. The base of our global movement is our settlement-level networks of savings groups.

At the **city and national level**, SDI federations prioritise shaping the policies, practices, and resource flows that impact the lives of slum dwellers across settlements and determine the inclusivity and resilience of the whole city. At this level, SDI federations deploy their tools at citywide scale, directing their social and political capital toward influencing the systemic barriers and drivers of change, and partnering with government to make change. SDI prioritises holistic action that moves beyond sectoral, project-based interventions that view settlements as somehow separate from the city. Here, SDI federations demand slum dwellers be recognised as citizens of the city – with the same rights to essential services (including health and education) as those in the city's formal neighborhoods.

At the **global level**, SDI federations advance the citywide change agenda by raising the profile of slum dwellers, their challenges, aspirations and collective capacities, so that they inform global development agendas and their implementation strategies. Critically, SDI creates spaces and opportunities for slum dwellers to speak for themselves in these platforms – countering the dominant approach which sees professionals speaking on their behalf. SDI federations use their data to back up their advocacy at the regional and global level and strive to raise awareness for the fact that informality is the norm in cities of the Global South and that global urban growth and slum growth will be virtually synonymous by 2050. Only by understanding this reality will global decision makers focus the requisite attention and resources on this population and their contribution to achieving global development commitments.

The enabling pathway of SDI's TOC speaks to the **organisational level** outcomes required to drive impactful and accountable community-led change at the settlement, city and national, and global level. A strong

ecosystem of organisations supporting community-led change in the Global South is necessary to deliver and generate evidence of scalable lasting outcomes and systemic change. As such, this pathway speaks to our strategy for maintaining and growing mission-critical slum dweller and support-professional capacities through targeted institutional strengthening support to SDI's national federations, local support-NGOs, and Secretariat – as well as the community-led governance bodies that oversee our operations. This support will ensure impact is community-led, accountable, and transparent and upholds our commitment to a culture of exemplary organisational integrity.

4.2.3 Our SDI rituals

SDI federations use a set of core “rituals” to anchor community organising. These rituals are referenced in the actions sketched out in the “What SDI does” section of the TOC. These “rituals” are inextricably linked to the identity of SDI federations. As a network, we take great pride in the fundamental role these rituals play in ensuring robust community-led change, which is the heart and soul of our value proposition. Three fundamental SDI rituals are explained below. While others exist, this set of three is practiced consistently across all federations and is considered a non-negotiable element of federation-building and federation-led impact.

The “savings ritual”

Since SDI's inception, federation organising has been anchored by the ritual of daily savings, whereby slum dwellers – especially women – come together to form savings groups and save a small amount each day. Their savings are recorded in individual savings books (often referred to as a federation-member passports) and in the books of the group. With time, savings accumulate, and group members have the opportunity not only to draw funds from their own savings in times of need, but to access loans from their group. Often referred to as the “building blocks of federations,” savings groups mobilised and networked by SDI serve the obvious purpose of enhancing slum dweller livelihoods, social safety nets, and access to pro-poor credit; as well as the less obvious but fundamentally important purpose of organising communities, building individual and collective capacities, nurturing peer-to-peer support and social cohesion, and building the social and political capital essential for enhancing the influence of slum dwellers. By design, the savings-led organising ritual targets women who organically emerge as trusted organisers and leaders of the movement. As savings groups federate, the more inward-looking focus of group members shifts to an understanding of shared challenges impacting slum dwellers at the settlement, city and national, and global level and communities start pursuing action as a federation.

The “profiling and enumeration ritual”

Slum profiling, mapping and enumeration involves organising slum dwellers to gather critical data on the scale and nature of urban informality and the priorities of those living in slums. This data make visible the true nature of the city and the realities experienced by the urban majority. Such data are essential to any authentic effort to plan for more inclusive and resilient cities. The methods by which the data are collected is the key ingredient for ensuring slum dwellers are viewed as partners – rather than simply beneficiaries – of urban development. By organising at city-wide scale and producing citywide data on slums, federations generate information heretofore unavailable to city authorities. This constitutes invaluable political capital which federations use to negotiate a seat at urban development decision-making tables, to engage in highly informed pro-poor advocacy, and to be recognised as citizens with the same rights and responsibilities as those living in the formal part of the city. Slum profiling, mapping and enumeration have progressed significantly from the original pencil and paper maps created by federations for the first half of SDI's existence. Today our data are largely digitised and in part standardised to enable more impactful engagement with relevant authorities and stronger advocacy at the national and global level. SDI youth have played a major role in this digital transition and the incorporation of media and story into the offering. SDI's profiling and enumeration ritual anchors what has come to be known as the Know



Your City Campaign – a recognisable brand, drawing much needed global attention to urban informality and celebrating the central role of slum dwellers in truly knowing cities in the Global South.

The “peer-to-peer exchange ritual”

This ritual constitutes SDI’s primary strategy for building knowledge and learning amongst slum dweller federations. This ritual recognises that dominant development practice assumes the primacy of vertical models of “capacity building” that seek to transfer knowledge from a narrow class of professionals using formal models. Peer-to-peer learning, by contrast, supports collective, experience-based, action-oriented learning that builds powerful bonds between urban communities at the local, national, and global level. Such learning goes beyond technocratic problem-solving and incorporates nuanced reflection on the interplay between the formal and informal in order to bridge the ever-widening gap between policy/strategy and implementation/action in cities of the Global South. Increasingly, these exchanges have included government and other key stakeholders. Such exchanges go a long way toward combatting the power imbalances that exclude slum dwellers from contributing to city development strategy by creating a space where communities and officials have a shared agenda to learn and to make change. Innumerable impactful working relationships between federations and government have been established or strengthened thanks to this key ritual – resulting in the co-production of practical strategy and interventions to make change in slum settlements.

4.3 How will we resource our Strategic Plan?

Savings, combined with perseverance and skills of thousands of federation members, are at the heart of SDI and continues to be one of our key instruments for building livelihoods and community resilience and to engage in transformative partnerships with relevant stakeholders at the city and national level. But managing and strengthening an organisation like SDI, ensuring professional support to our federations and developing and implementing programmes at scale obviously requires additional resources.

Throughout the several decades of our existence, both the SDI Secretariat and also the majority of the SDI affiliates relied heavily on a few dedicated donors from the Global North. These donors funded the core functions of the organisation and offered a high degree of programme flexibility. In recent years, the SDI network has seen a decline in funding available for our organisation’s core work and decreasing flexibility in the design and geographical scope of our programmes.

The successful implementation of the Strategic Plan will rely on a combination of funding raised by the SDI Secretariat for, and with, the network and funding raised at the affiliate level. A specific goal for this strategic period is to further strengthen the position and capacity of our affiliates to raise resources independently or in partnerships with other affiliates and/or external partners. The Secretariat will play a supporting role in such processes.

We are convinced that long-term, complex, systems change can only be achieved through a locally-led programmatic approach and the network will continue to seek partners and resources that align with this approach. Part of the organisational development this plan envisions will build the capacity and confidence of our members to stand up for their values and knowledge of how to make impact when they engage potential funders. Going forward we are going to pursue three different avenues of resourcing of our organisation and its programmes:

1 Firstly, we will continue to leverage what we believe is SDI’s strong value proposition to donors mainly from the Global North (institutional donors and philanthropies). The nature of our organisation – embedded in urban poor communities and activities driven by federation leaders - enables us to deliver high value for money. This is an increasingly competitive field to work (and succeed) in and will require us to continuously strengthen our delivery model and seek collaboration in consortia

across our network as well as with external partners with complimenting capacities. Of particular importance for our success in this field is our ability to document our impact and explain the need for investing in the organisational enablers making that impact possible. Concretely that means that the grant proposals we develop must advance the network’s prioritised outcomes; include community organising (using core SDI rituals); create space for authentic community leadership of interventions; and incorporate community-led learning, monitoring and evaluation (LME).

2 Secondly, we will continue to seek resources from a smaller group of donors whose funding structures permit support to grassroots-based organisations such as SDI to deliver community-led, learning-driven and systemic change. Core organisational support will allow us to manage and strengthen our governance structures, invest in the expansion of the movement (more members, larger reach) and secure a minimum level of professional capacity at PSO and Secretariat level. However, core organisational support functions will increasingly be resourced through our programme-focused grants as these functions are prerequisites for successful programme implementation.

3 Thirdly, we want to explore more innovative ways of resourcing our work, including service delivery contracts (which some affiliates already engage in) and social impact investments. Contracts with local government to map and profile settlements, tapping into affordable loan-based subsidy schemes for housing construction or setting up/scaling businesses for delivering affordable sanitation or electricity services with social impact investors are all examples of more innovative ways of resourcing our work. For all such innovative models it is crucial that we mitigate scope drift with SDI network members engaging in activities outside the prioritised outcome areas. We do not expect that the current strategic period will see such resourcing models becoming a dominant resourcing strategy for our work, but especially towards the second half of the strategic period we will invest in exploring and testing such approaches at scale.

4.4 The role of our Urban Poor Funds

SDI’s Urban Poor Funds (UPF) are revolving funds that use community savings to leverage capital from other actors – targeting governments especially – for onward loaning to slum dweller communities for land, housing, livelihoods, and other upgrading initiatives. UPFs at affiliate level have been referred to as UPFNs (ie. Urban Poor Fund Nationals), which have – throughout SDI’s history – received seed capital from UPFI (a global account managed by the Secretariat). At present, approximately 70 percent of affiliates have active UPFNs. These local finance facilities are managed by majority community-led governance bodies, responsible for determining the funds’ operating procedures and managing loan approvals and repayment monitoring. UPFNs will continue to resource the slum upgrading and livelihood outcomes of our Strategic Plan and increasingly our climate change adaptation interventions. The funds are intended to set precedents for the kind of pro-poor finance instruments effective for enabling community-led impact. Our UPFNs proved invaluable during the Covid crisis, when much external funding was frozen and responsive resources were desperately needed by slum dwellers. The experience reinforced our understanding of the value of community-managed funds for decreasing dependency on donor resources and creating resource envelopes that are flexible and enable local responsiveness to crisis. As part of our Strategic Plan deliberations, the network agreed to establish a core team with representation from affiliates with the most impactful UPFNs to develop a common set of guiding principles for UPFN establishment, management, and growth and to revisit ambitions to establish a sustainable UPFI. Our organisational development pathway will support network-wide capacity-building through peer support to institutionalise the guiding principles. SDI’s Business Development Strategy expounds upon our approach to resource mobilisation in greater detail.



Our Operating Model

5.1 How is our network governed and managed?

The global SDI network is governed by the:

Council of Federations

The Council comprises three members from each mature SDI affiliates (namely, two slum dweller federation members and one professional from the support-NGO). The Council provides overall strategic leadership and direction; appoints members of the Board of Directors; reviews and evaluates network performance with regard to Strategic Plan implementation.

Board of Directors

The Board comprises four representatives of slum dweller federations, one representative of support-NGOs, one urban development expert, one chartered accountant, and the SDI Secretariat Director. The Board is responsible for fiduciary oversight, operational oversight, and hiring the Secretariat Director.

The global SDI network is managed by the:

Secretariat

The Secretariat is a registered Non-Profit Company (NPC) based in Cape Town, South Africa. The Secretariat is responsible for day-to-day network management in support of SDI programmes including the facilitation of cross-network: fundraising, LME, advocacy, communications, and the administration of donor funds.

Coordinating Team

The Coordinating Team comprises nine slum dweller federation leaders and 2 professional from the support NGOs charged with working hand-in-hand with the Secretariat to ensure joint community/professional management of the network's operations and effective communication and peer-to-peer support for national federations.

The global SDI network comprises:

Slum dweller federations

Slum dweller federations are poor people's movements typically made up of hundreds of women-led savings groups. Slum dweller federations come together at the regional and global level to form the SDI movement. It is this slum dweller movement that constitutes the heart and soul of the SDI network, sets its strategic direction, and drives implementation of programmes.

National support-NGOs

Slum dweller federations are supported by national support-NGOs (also referred to as Professional Support Organisations, PSOs). Typically established with the sole intent to offer professional support the national slum dweller federation, these local NGOs are responsible for day-to-day network management in support of federation programmes including the facilitation of community-led LME, advocacy, communications. They are responsible for fundraising and the administration of donor funds.

SDI affiliates

Together, a national slum dweller federation and its national support-NGO, constitute an SDI affiliate.

5.2 How do our strategy and operating model align?

SDI's strategy is clear in its commitment to community-led change – driven by organised slum dweller movements – along settlement, city and national, and global pathways to change. Our strategy's enabling pathway supports organisational development of an ecosystem of professional (formal) and community (informal) organisations pursuing the same community-led strategy. In this section we touch briefly upon the core elements of our operating model and how they align with our strategy. Broadly, an operating model is understood to comprise four key elements:

Governance

As detailed above, SDI's governance is the responsibility of a majority slum dweller-led Council and a Board of Directors of whom half are slum dwellers. Women's leadership in these governance bodies is prioritised to ensure women comprise the majority. As such, the SDI network ensures its strategic commitment to community-led, women-led development is upheld by slum dweller and women's leadership of the network's governance bodies. Community-led, women-led development begins at the level of strategy, not at the level of programme implementation when many key decisions have already been made. Community oversight is essential to ensuring their ownership and the accountability of the organisation to the people it aims to serve. In structuring our governance in this way, SDI sets precedents for how cities can meaningfully involve slum dwellers in decision-making and how other organisations can authentically support community-led impact.

Organisational structure

The SDI network's organisational structure enables delivery of a global programme rooted in local strategy in pursuit of local impact at scale. As the Strategic Plan methodology makes clear, the aggregation of local priorities, knowledge, and experience produced SDI's global strategy. SDI's organisational structure ensures the settlement level priorities of slum dwellers determine the city and national level strategies of its federations. Support-NGOs bring rich local expertise to augmenting federation capacities to implement their strategies for making impact. Federations and support-NGOs forge unique and norm-shifting working relationships that place informal and formal expertise on a level playing field and truly enable community-led development. SDI's national affiliates come together in regional level hubs to forge transnational alliances that anchor the global movement. This structure supports effective flow of information between the settlement and the global level structures of the network and coordinated implementation of a shared strategy with ongoing peer-to-peer support and accountability baked into operations.

Leadership model

In the SDI network leaders emerge as individuals demonstrate their passion, trustworthiness, and commitment to advancing the organisation's strategy. Federation leaders are from the slum communities the network aims to serve and are entrusted by their peers to represent their true needs and aspirations. Federation leaders do not elevate themselves above the wider membership but facilitate collective decision-making and the enhancement of the capabilities of a critical mass to assess their own needs and drive their own change agenda. As



SDI grows, it understands its leadership model must guard against the leader-for-life trap. Recent reforms have put in place term limits for leaders on key governance bodies and our strategy is explicit about our commitment to ensuring second-tier leadership drive impact. To be clear, federation leaders who built and dedicated their lives to the growth of the movement and its impact will continue to play vital roles in the organisation. Their experiences, mentorship, vision, and capacity to engage strategic partners is invaluable. The SDI network's professional leadership is charged with furthering a horizontal leadership model that keeps collective community wisdom at its core.

Processes and tools

The SDI network's processes and tools must reinforce the structures and leadership model created to deliver a community-driven approach. In the professionalised development space, care must be taken to ensure processes and tools build slum dweller voice and agency rather than undermine it. SDI guards against this risk by ensuring community-led planning, community input and sign-off on grant proposals and reports, community-led LME and the incorporation of community-led rituals in the delivery of all programmes. Where our strategy calls for research and evidence, impact monitoring, and advocacy our operating model ensures the processes and tools are in place for slum dweller communities to execute these tasks for themselves – building collective local capacity to drive change over the long haul. SDI's processes and tools shift the status quo in which poor people are viewed as beneficiaries of development rather than active agents of change and set precedents for shifting development practice away from externally delivered projectised interventions (increasingly consultant-led) to the kind of collaborative multi-stakeholder local programmes essential for the creation of inclusive and resilient cities where the lives of slum dwellers are substantively improved.

5.3 What is our approach to partnership?

We understand that the overall intended impact of our Strategic Plan cannot be achieved without collaboration with a wide variety of other stakeholders. SDI has extensive experience initiating and participating in multi-sectoral collaboration involving government, non-government, private sector, academic, and community-led organisations. Systems change demands sustained partnership across sectors and being intentional about creating and resourcing spaces for collaboration and collective agenda-setting and action. Our secretariat and support-NGOs provide essential "translation" services in these spaces – supporting slum dweller organisations and formal/professional institutions to actually "hear" each other. This essential role ensures meaningful collaboration with vulnerable groups, rather than tokenistic performative participation. Our Know Your City slum profiling and enumeration work plays a critical role in supporting slum communities to communicate their needs and aspirations through compelling data about their living conditions and development priorities. The first step toward impactful partnership is being clear on one's own strategy. As is often said, without a clear strategy you will end up implementing the strategy of others. Our Strategic Plan sets out the change our network seeks to make and our approach to change-making, which is rooted in our values. During network-wide strategic planning consultations, the following questions for assessing potential partners emerged:

- To what extent is there is overlap or alignment between the ambitions of the potential partner and SDI?
- Which SDI Theory of Change outcomes would be advanced by the partnership?
- How would the potential partner enhance SDI's ability to advance these outcomes?
- Would the partnership support SDI's community-led approaches to advancing outcomes-level change?
- How would the partnership contribute to local level impact?

Increasingly, SDI is invited to participate in large coalitions seeking community representation in their ranks. This is a positive development, indicating greater acceptance of the necessity of community involvement, but all coalitions are not equal and the time and human resource demands of coalition participation – especially at the global level – are often high and demand scrutiny. Coalitions will be assessed using the same questions stated above, but will be especially mindful of the costs associated with coalition participation and a realistic assessment of the timeframe for making local impact. Will participation in the coalition accelerate change for slum communities or divert precious resources away from impactful work? SDI federations express frustration with many large global coalitions, whose operations and considerable resources get stuck at the level of global agenda-setting, knowledge-building and advocacy, and infrequently translate into change on the ground.

Since its inception, the SDI network has prioritised partnership with government, given its essential role in the design, resourcing, and implementation of inclusive and resilient urban policy – especially as it relates to the equitable delivery of essential services. Our new Strategic Plan continues to prioritise outcomes seeking to strengthen collaboration between slum dwellers and government in the planning and implementation of city-wide development, and to contribute to more equitable city and national policy frameworks and budgets. At the affiliate-level, SDI federations will continue to initiate and strengthen partnerships with local and national government, formalising these through Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) where possible and appropriate to sustain cooperation across political transitions and personnel shifts, and ensure implementation of agreements. At the network-level SDI will continue to strengthen and operationalise partnership with local government associations in order to advance a shared agenda for increased resourcing of local governments to fulfil their mandates and ensure more proactive and inclusive urban policy and practice that protects people and planet. The Know Your City campaign offers a strategic entry point to operationalising partnership with such associations, but we understand more work is necessary to ensure: slum communities are viewed as more than simply service providers tasked with generating the data required for city-wide planning; that the data alone won't bring about equitable city development and that sustained pressure by organised slum communities is essential; that local government associations and slum federations must build mutual accountabilities and both bring resources to implementation of their shared agenda; and that partnership impact will be assessed according to concrete improvements to the lives of slum dwellers.

5.4 What is our approach to inclusion?

5.4.1 We are an organisation of, not for, slum dwellers

We are an organisation of, not for, slum dwellers. SDI organises slum dwelling communities in the Global South – a population long subjected to forced evictions, denied the basic services and infrastructure required for minimum health and security, and excluded from economic opportunity and political participation. These vulnerabilities do not equate to a lack of capacity or agency and our network reveres slum dwellers and their organisations for their knowledge, resilience, creativity, and dedication to improving the lives of their families, communities, and cities. In a development sector, society and culture whose institutions accord subordinate status to the poor and non-professional, SDI seeks to shift norms by celebrating, amplifying, and taking direction from slum dwellers in all their diversity. We understand slum dweller communities are not homogenous and there are especially vulnerable persons within our communities. Persons with disabilities, urban migrants and refugees, the infirm, young mothers, widows, victims of gender-based violence, and addicts are but some examples of those who may be especially vulnerable in our communities. Our network has demonstrated its ability to be inclusive of all and commits to continually improve our inclusive practice, underpinned by the fundamental belief in the value each and every slum dweller brings to our ability to understand and enact inclusive and resilient change.



5.4.2 We are a women-led organisation

Gender transformation has been a priority of SDI since its inception – continually striving, and achieving, majority female representation within the network’s membership and leadership structures. Women’s participation, organising, and leadership has been prioritised and nurtured in a conscious effort to transform the prevailing power relations that exclude women from decision making in their families, communities, and cities and result in unequal development outcomes. Women’s voices have been amplified through collective action; their independence enhanced by daily savings and access to loans; and their leadership capacities developed through ongoing peer-to-peer exchange with throughout the global network.

As part of the Strategic Planning process the network reflected upon its ongoing commitment to being a women-led organisation and what that means in the context of our organisational philosophy and operations. SDI federations use the term “women-led” to describe what is, in essence, a feminist approach. During deliberations held to develop this Strategic Plan, the network reiterated the following key elements of its women-led approach:

- Being women-led means that women’s priorities for urban development steer our work.
- Being women-led means ensuring a critical mass of organised women anchor our movement.
- Being women-led means women are recognised as leaders in their homes, communities, and cities.
- Being women-led reflects a conscious shift away from patriarchal (top-down, individualist, power-over, rather than power-with) leadership models and styles.
- Being women-led does not exclude men from positions of leadership.
- Being women-led means all the outcomes we pursue must advance the social, economic, and political equality of women.
- Being women-led means supporting communities as collectives and prioritising inclusive urban development aimed at improving the well-being of families.
- Being women-led means we commit to radical inclusion of all marginalised persons and an end to concentrated power and privilege.

5.4.3 We prioritise youth-led impact

The overwhelming majority of slum dwellers are under the age of 35 – making youth an essential demographic for driving and sustaining urban transformation in the Global South. Beginning with SDI’s last Strategic Plan, our network made a clear commitment to increased targeting of this population. In the last five years we mobilised more youth into our ranks, created spaces for youth to shape their own strategies for change-making, and invited youth to take part in key governance fora at the regional and global level. The network has agreed to double-down on efforts to support youth-led impact as part of this Strategic Plan and identified the following key elements of its approach to youth inclusion:

- Sustaining the SDI network and meaningful urban transformation demands robust youth inclusion in the SDI network.
- Youth and the “mother federation” work toward advancement of shared strategic outcomes in accordance with the core SDI values.
- Youth should be involved in the full spectrum of federation activities and the full programme cycle: from strategy development; to programme design and implementation; to learning; monitoring and evaluation.

- Youth should be given space to collectively plan and innovate impactful methods for advancing the network’s strategy.
- Youth should be represented in SDI governance and leadership spaces. They should become leaders in the same way “mother federation” members do: through demonstrating their commitment to the process and the trust of their peers and communities.
- Youth should receive structured mentorship from network leadership and intergenerational transfer of knowledge and experience within the network should be facilitated.



Learning, Monitoring, and Evaluation (LME)

6.1 What is our approach to LME?

Critically, our approach to LME is community-led in design and implementation and is intended to serve – first and foremost – SDI’s internal learning and adaptation agenda for improved accountability, advocacy, and impact. LME is the business of our entire network, not a technocratic exercise managed by select professionals responding to donor demands. Indeed, community-led LME has always be part and parcel of standard federation business (though infrequently referred to as such). Participatory dialogue and reflection by slum dwellers on how much change is being made, what’s working and what isn’t, and how things need to change has always guided the decision-making of federations, support-NGOs, and the SDI network management and governance bodies. SDI’s LME approach is underpinned by our core values, which insist upon the legitimisation and amplification of slum dweller knowledge. Our data will be disaggregated by gender in order to ensure outcomes-level impact upholds our commitment to gender transformation. As our methods become more innovative and more robust at generating impact evidence, these core values continue to light our way.

In addition to its internal purpose, our community-led LME serves to support accountability to partners and set precedents for decolonised, participatory, and locally-led impact measurement and evaluation, which has tremendous untapped potential to shift the status quo on donor-driven development by putting local communities at the heart of defining and measuring impact. Community-led LME presentations to SDI’s donors and partners will encourage funders to adopt and resource more community-led sense-making and evidence generation and to use the insights generated to guide their programmes and investments. SDI will show funders that by supporting community-led LME they are simultaneously enhancing the impact of their programmes. This is because the very processes that enable community-led LME considerably enhance human, social, and political capital in communities. For example, our community-led LME itself enhances the strategic influence of slum dwellers; improves social cohesion; increases pro-poor data driven development; amplifies slum dweller data, stories; and voices; and builds a second-tier of leadership.

6.2 How will we ensure communities take the lead in understanding and measuring impact?

The first step in our community-led LME approach for this Strategic Plan was the generation of a community-led Theory of Change. This step ensures the vision for change is determined by communities in accordance with their own definitions of impact. The next step will involve the convening of slum dwellers – especially youth – to develop an LME plan anchored by quantitative and qualitative indicators (hard data and rich stories) of outcomes-level change. Youth-led story-telling – recognised for its untapped potential to support decolonised impact assessment and knowledge transmission – will be prioritised and enabled by existing youth media capacities developed under the flourishing KYC TV programme. Our LME approach aligns with and will be more fully integrated within SDI’s Know Your City initiative and online platform – generating compelling community-led knowledge and impact evidence for enhancing our network’s influence.

Convening slum dweller federation representatives to develop an LME framework and plan ensures community ownership of the LME system and that it measures what matters to them. Prioritising youth participation will ensure intergenerational knowledge transfer between senior and youth federation members as they reflect on how to measure advancement of the outcomes they set for the network. The LME framework and plan will be disseminated to the entire network and build upon their existing strengths for data collection, media-making, participatory dialogues, and peer-to-peer learning exchange. SDI’s LME outputs will, as part of this Strategic Plan, be showcased on the Know Your City platform and anchor evidence-based, outcomes-oriented communications and advocacy to enhance our network’s impact.



Risk management

7.1 What could go wrong and how will we try to prevent it?

The following matrix summarises key internal and external risks at the network and affiliate level and the mitigation steps SDI will take to minimise the likelihood of said risks negatively impacting upon the network's ability to implement the Strategic Plan.

RISK	RISK IMPACT	MITIGATION STEPS
NETWORK-LEVEL: INTERNAL		
Participatory governance structures function sub-optimally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission-drift • Top-down leadership • Inadequate fiduciary oversight 	<p>To mitigate this risk and ensure SDI's governance structures (Board, Council) function optimally SDI will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure resource mobilisation for the convening of participatory governance spaces • Provide mentorship for community leaders to understand their individual roles and responsibilities as well as the role and responsibilities of the governance body upon which they sit • Uphold the collective agreements articulated in the SDI Charter • Ensure term limits are adhered to • Ensure effective preparation of governance meeting agendas, supporting documents (in formats digestible by federation members), and resolutions that respond to the responsibilities of the body in question
Management is insufficiently agile and responsive to opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed delivery • Reputational risk • Missed opportunities for growth and innovation 	<p>To mitigate this risk and ensure SDI's management (both Secretariat and Coordinating Team) is agile and responsive, SDI will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to build the capacities of the management team to act decisively and to communicate and execute decisions in a timely manner • Continue to refine clear roles and responsibilities for members of the management team to enhance efficiency and accountability and protocols for joint decision-making • Streamline affiliate engagement and contracting processes to enhance efficiency and affiliate responsiveness • Ensure responsibilities for communication with key network partners and potential partners are designated
Technological innovation (particularly re: Know Your City platform) is unresponsive to slum dweller communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission-drift • Lack of uptake • Reduced impact 	<p>To mitigate this risk and ensure the Know Your City Platform is responsive to the needs of slum dwellers and serves to advance the outcomes in the Strategic Plan, SDI will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage tech partners with long term relationships with the network to ensure community priorities drive innovation



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure tech innovation follows community-level innovation, not the other way round • Communicate clearly and decisively with tech partners to ensure network priorities are understood and resources for platform development are used efficiently • Support streamlined feedback loops to ensure technological adaptations are meeting affiliate needs • Develop a KYC Strategy to detail clear aspirations for SDI's Know Your City work, which the platform enables, to ensure it is fit-for-purpose
Network-level: External		
Reduced international development aid envelope and less availability of non-projectised, longer-term support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission-drift • Fragmented implementation • Reduced impact • High cost of professional support to pursuing and managing small grants 	<p>To mitigate this risk and enhancing the attractiveness of SDI to strategic funding partners, SDI will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategically and creatively disseminate and build awareness for SDI's new Strategic Plan and opportunities to collaborate • Generate and disseminate robust community-generated evidence of impact • Demonstrate the highest level of efficiency and integrity in resource management and programme delivery • Work with strategic funders to advocate for greater support to longer-term programmatic funding for community-led change
Geo-political risks and other shocks complicate delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced impact • Higher costs of programme delivery • Crisis management takes precedence over proactive change-making 	<p>To mitigate the innumerable potential global risks that could impact Strategic Plan implementation (many of which were spelled out in the situational analysis), SDI will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be proactive in its programming to try to get ahead of key risks • Build network-wide capacities for responsiveness to shocks • Ensure regular communication with affected local affiliates informs communication with partners in order to maximise adaptability and responsiveness to local needs
Affiliate-level: Internal		
Governance bodies of support-NGOs are inadequately engaged with the wider SDI network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission-drift • Top-down leadership • Unfulfilled potential to advance Strategic Plan aims 	<p>Affiliate-level governance – especially as it relates to support-NGO Boards – demands greater network-level attention. To mitigate risk, SDI will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase engagement with these bodies (and federation leadership) • Share key SDI documents such as the Strategic Plan and SDI Charter with affiliate Boards and engage them in collective reflection on the same • Build comradery between support-NGO boards and create online spaces for them (and federation leadership) to strategise on effective support of federations and opportunities for them to contribute to resource mobilisation



Under-resourced management limits effective support to federations.

- Mission-drift
- Affiliate dependency of SDI Secretariat funding
- Unfulfilled potential to advance Strategic Plan aims

Without adequate investment in affiliate-level management, resource mobilisation and programme delivery suffer. To mitigate risk, SDI will:

- SDI will invest more in critical human resources at affiliate level and seek to maximise predictable and reliable income streams for core programmes
- Build the capacity of local professionals to mobilise resources that advance Strategic Plan outcomes and uphold SDI core values (ensure federations aren't project implementors for other organisations)
- Build the capacity of management to ensure reporting and advocacy communicate local impact and attract more strategic partners and resources.
- Ensure support-NGO management works hand-in-hand with local federation leadership and an open and supportive relationship with the SDI Secretariat is nurtured

Conflict between federations and support-NGOs

- Reputational risk
- Delayed programme delivery

Periodical conflict between slum dweller federations and their support NGOs are normal, especially as the former grows in its capacity and the respective roles of each party evolve. To mitigate risk, SDI will:

- SDI Coordinating Team and Secretariat offer clear, consistent, and timely communication of expectations as articulated in the SDI Charter
- Encourage local conflict resolution and only offer network intervention/mediation as a last resort
- Suspend funding to affiliates whose working relationship has broken down until a joint way forward has been signed off by both parties

Affiliate-level: External

Government partnerships are unstable owing to political transitions and shifting personnel

- Programme delivery interruptions
- Resource constraints for re-engaging new leadership

To mitigate risk, SDI will:

- Support affiliates to institutionalise/formalise relationships with government where appropriate – through instruments such as MOU and Memorandum of Acceptance (MOA)
- Encourage affiliates to engage political and technical champions in government to diversify support
- To provide ongoing support to affiliate meetings with government, necessary for maintaining impactful working relationships and onboarding new officials

Shocks such as climate disaster, political upheaval, forced evictions, disease outbreaks

- Reduced impact
- Delayed programme delivery
- Crisis management takes precedence over proactive change-making

To mitigate risk, SDI will:

- Ensure regular communication with affected local affiliates and maximise support to local priorities
- Support peer-to-peer conversation with network members with experience dealing with said shock
- Support programmes that are proactive in building resilience to such shocks



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support flexible programme implementation by affiliates that schedule delivery in accordance with contextual risk management priorities (ie. Not profiling and enumeration during election campaigns or monsoon season)
<p>Donor-driven agendas and approaches usurp federation priorities and values</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission-drift • Fragmented implementation • Reduced impact 	<p>Resource-constrained affiliates will be pressured to accept grants for projects that are conceptualised by funders according to their own priorities, definitions of impact, and preferred project-delivery models. This severely impinges upon the network's ability to implement its Strategic Plan. To mitigate this risk, SDI will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support affiliates to assess opportunities in accordance with the Strategic Plan and negotiate with funders to ensure federation-determined outcomes and approaches will be supported by the said grant • Support affiliates to articulate their unique value proposition and the benefits of resourcing community-led programme design, implementation, and LME in all projects/programmes





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