

Accra: Leading in Africa

Best practices and citizen engagement put Accra ahead

Accra, Ghana stands out ahead of the other African cities in our study in advancing its SDG agenda. It is the only city in the region classified as a “sprinter”—among those making considerable progress on its social, environmental, and economic goals.

Africa faces the most challenges of any region in meeting the UN’s SDG commitments, given its high levels of environmental degradation, poverty, and unemployment, along with rapid population growth and weak state institutions. In our benchmarking study of SDG progress across 167 cities, African municipalities generally trailed behind cities in all other regions.

Yet Accra has done better than the other 19 African cities studied. What has it done differently? It has

incorporated all the 17 SDGs into its development plans, which has been done by only one other African city, Kigali. In addition, Accra has made considerable progress on 14 of the SDGs, more than any other city in the region.

Accra also has followed several critical steps that can help ensure the success of an SDG program. It has secured a high level of support for the SDGs across government departments; it regularly monitors SDG efforts; and it has designated a specific department to take the lead on SDG initiatives. It also is using smart technology solutions across more urban domains than other African cities. And it has made important headway on citizen engagement—another key component of SDG achievement.

Addressing the waste challenge

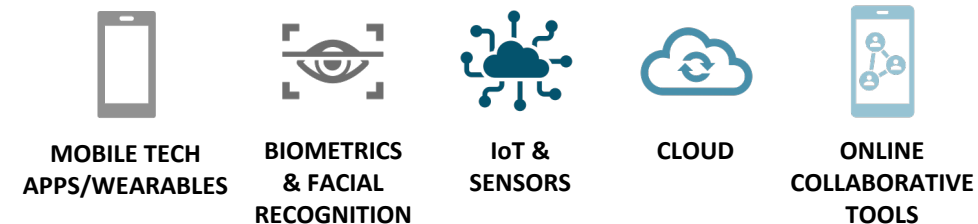
Environmental sustainability, particularly related to clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), is one area where Accra has adopted bold initiatives. The government has committed to make Accra one of the cleanest cities in Africa, and in 2019 it drafted a new national plastics management policy to reduce plastics pollution. The policy was designed to promote recycling of plastic waste into other products as well as to begin an intensive environmental education program. In 2019 Ghana also became the first African nation to join the Global Plastic Action Partnership (GPAP), a public-private platform dedicated to fostering action to combat the plastics pollution crisis. The GPAP is supporting the mobilization of \$77 million towards the establishment of a Circular Economy Framework in Ghana, in collaboration with the Global Environment Facility, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, and the Ghanaian government.



How Accra engages citizens

Reaches out to stakeholders to demonstrate the value of smart city projects	Uses digital and traditional methods to communicate with citizens	Ensures disadvantaged populations are involved in the process	Encourages citizens to use digital engagement tools
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Where Accra has made large technology investments



A proactive approach to funding the SDGs

Funding of SDGs programs is one of the biggest challenges for African cities, but it is an area where Accra stands out.

In 2018, Ghana's Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with the Ghana Investment Promotions Centre and the SDGs Advisory Unit, launched the annual Accra SDGs Investment Fair to encourage private financing of SDG programs. The fair was created to facilitate collaboration between investors and sustainable public- and private-sector projects and businesses. The most recent fair, in 2020, was conducted virtually and was designed to develop post-COVID-19 funding strategies, since the pandemic further squeezed already constrained public finances.

Seeking impact investors

In 2019, Ghana joined the Global Steering Group for Impact Investing, an entity formed by the G7 countries in 2013 to jumpstart the development and collaboration of impact investing to fund social and environmental projects. Ghana was only the second Sub-Saharan African country, after South Africa, to join. Zambia became the third.

The same year, Ghana founded Impact Investing Ghana (IIGH), a community of members and a platform to bring together entrepreneurs, intermediaries, suppliers of capital, policy-makers, market builders, and other stakeholders such as faith-based and civil society organizations.

SDGs Financing Roundtable

Subsequently, in 2020, the government joined the Sustainable Development Investment Partnership (SDIP), an initiative of the World Economic Forum and the OECD, to hold the first SDGs Country Financing Roadmap Roundtable in Accra. It was the first African country to partner with the SDIP.

The event brought together governmental institutions, donors, multilateral organizations, development banks, and private investors to investigate innovative methods to finance the SDGs, including foreign investment and private equity.

While this funding strategy was initiated at the national level, Ghana's government also engages leaders at the local level. The SDGs national budgeting and financing process involves a bottom-up approach where local authorities actively participate.

Diversifying financing

In addition to these national efforts, Accra's leaders are seeking to diversify their sources of financing. According to our survey, the main sources of funding now for Accra are multilateral financing, government-based borrowing, and user fees taxes. Over the next three years, multilateral financing will remain vital for the city, but private-sector financing and crowdsourcing from the public will grow in importance.

Accra's main sources of financing now and in 3 years

Now	In three years
Government-based borrowing	Private-sector financing
Funding through user fees/taxes	Multilateral and development funding
Multilateral and development funding	Crowdfunding from public in small amounts

Accra's top challenges to achieving the SDGs

 High costs and financing constraints	 Weak economy/ high unemployment
 Finding the right suppliers and partners	 Fast pace of technologic change

“What we cannot afford to do, even in these critical times, is shift resources away from crucial SDG actions. The response to the pandemic cannot be de-linked from the SDGs. Indeed, achieving the SDGs will put us on a firm path to dealing with global health risks and emerging infectious diseases. Achieving SDG 3 (Good Health) will mean strengthening the capacity of countries for early warning, risk reduction, and management of national and global health risks.”

–Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana (Opinion piece for Thompson Reuters Foundation)