



## Journalism Academies advance urban expertise at World Urban Forum

**Medellín, 6 April 2014:** Journalists from all over the world participated in the Digital Media and Urban Journalism Academies, held in the side-lines of the World Urban Forum (WUF7) which opens on Monday in Medellín, Colombia.

Opened by the Mayor of Medellín, Aníbal Gaviria, the Urban Journalism Academy was the first of a global programme aimed to expose journalists to the knowledge and tools they need to report on urban issues and to learn what they want to hear from experts in the field.



At the Digital Media Academy, moderated by Jorge Bela, URB.im, who is also one of the Forum's eDebate moderators, participants explored how digital media tools could be harnessed to advance the urban development agenda. The session demonstrated ways in which you could engage in urban development, education, fund raising and participatory information gathering to inform policy decisions.

While meetings and talks throughout the Plaza Mayor venue continued, the city itself celebrated the Forum with several cultural and social events, including a guided bicycle tour to open the segregated bike path on San Juan Avenue. A product of the cooperation between UN-Habitat, Valle de Aburrá Valley

Government (AMVA) and Despacio, a local NGO, the newly established pathways mean that the WUF7 venue now has safe access by bicycle from nearby suburbs, reducing the need for motorised transport and contributing to a reduced carbon footprint overall. With integrated bike stands and planters, preliminary estimates indicate that the implementation of the safe route could reduce as much as one ton of carbon dioxide emissions during the week of the World Urban Forum.

At the same time, a street fair with live performances encouraged involvement from the whole community and brought the World Urban Forum away from the meeting rooms and into the streets. Across the city, the local chapter of the UN-Habitat campaign, I'm a City Changer, "Puedo Cambiar el Mundo" organized cultural events over the weekend. The artists performing were selected through a public open call and created a party atmosphere.

Various public companies providing services to the citizens of Medellín, and the company in charge of planning the transformation of the city, took the opportunity to get in touch with the citizens. The public transport company of Medellín, famous for its innovative "Metrocable" gondola lift system connecting poor neighbourhoods, presented its plans to build a tramway in the city.

Out on the streets, the efforts appeared to be well received by those enjoying the free celebrations. "The World Urban Forum is a great opportunity for us as citizens and an acknowledgement of Medellín's efforts to improve," said Deisy David, a 21-year old participant at "Jardin vial" at the Street Fair in Plazuela de San Ignacio in downtown Medellín. "The urban initiative is putting a lot of effort on greening the city, and aims to improve the responsibility and identification of the citizens with their city," explained Juan Perez, a young activist of the group.

