

Progress made in the implementation of the **New Urban Agenda** in Africa (2022 - 2026)





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Executive Summary

Urban development in Sub-Saharan Africa has shifted towards a recognition of the urban advantage. Urban growth is accelerating, especially in intermediate cities. City size shapes risk, governance and opportunities for harnessing the catalytic benefits of urbanization. Across the four African subregions, common patterns emerge, including the persistence of informal settlements, rising absolute numbers of urban poor due to demographic growth, constrained municipal finance, and limited disaggregated urban poverty data.

The approaches to addressing these challenges are varied, based on city size, status and governance regime. From policy to infrastructure to investments, they have been community led, national and municipal government driven and many have received support from international agencies. Collectively, these interventions demonstrate a significant, though relatively resource-constrained, effort to realise the commitments of the New Urban Agenda

KEY FINDINGS

- There is improvement in coordination between multi-governance levels. Adoption of national urban policies and planning frameworks are exemplary of integrated policy approach for urban transformation. There is improvement in spatial and strategic planning. However, growth and investments are skewed towards larger metropolitan centres. National Finance frameworks are being deployed for national level financing, with significant sub-national gaps
- African cities are leveraging technology and innovation for urban transformation, However, the uncritical embrace of such technologies may pose an economic threat to the real estate, finance and transport sectors.
- Despite vast improvements in data landscapes, digital land systems and enhanced capacities, there is a structural data gap which results in insufficient access to disaggregated urban data. There is also a digital divide based on socio-economic profile and size of cities
- Access to finance is a bottleneck for housing and infrastructure. Fiscal decentralisation empowers local authorities to improve service delivery. However municipal finance and resource mobilisation is weak
- Urban growth is accompanied by increased urbanisation of poverty, evidenced by youth unemployment and widespread informality. The urban penalty is further evidenced through high housing deficits and unequal access to urban resources.

- Urban poverty, working poverty and social exclusion are structural factors that must be addressed at both local and national levels. Youth and women and disproportionately affected, hence targeted action to address their peculiar vulnerabilities are essential
- Safety and security issues threaten urban resilience. Climate vulnerability is exacerbated in larger cities, and a major trigger for conflict and internal displacement. Spatial displacement has a significant urban component that is not sufficiently considered.

KEY MESSAGES

- Implementation of urban policies are critical. This includes providing adequate financial, resources, technical and human resources required for systemic change
- The digital access must be enhanced for equity and structural transformation. While opportunities of technology and artificial intelligence must be leveraged, it is necessary to ensure that the demographic reality of the continent is incorporated into plans and
- Programmes. Education and training of Africa's youth, as well as opportunities for job creation in the digital/ knowledge economy must be pursued.
- Fiscal autonomy and support must be given to sub-national governments and intermediate cities
- Social sustainability, urban inclusion and targeted programming to lift people out of poverty must be explored.
- City level consequences of armed conflict such as urban violence, migration and self-settled IDPs must be given priority
- Climate solutions must be co-produced and deliver co-benefits for environment and society.

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Glossary of terms

3Cs	Compact, Connected and Coordinated Development
ACWA	African Cities Water Adaptation Fund
AURP	Africa Urban Resilience Programme
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
DDM	District Development Model
FiT	Feed-in Tariff
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INFFs	Integrated National Financing Frameworks
LED	Local Economic Development
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NbS	Nature-Based Solutions
NUA	New Urban Agenda
OSR	Own-Source Revenue
PPPs	Public–Private Partnerships
REIPPP	Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme
TOD	Transit-Oriented Development
VLRs	Voluntary Local Reviews
VNRs	Voluntary National Reviews

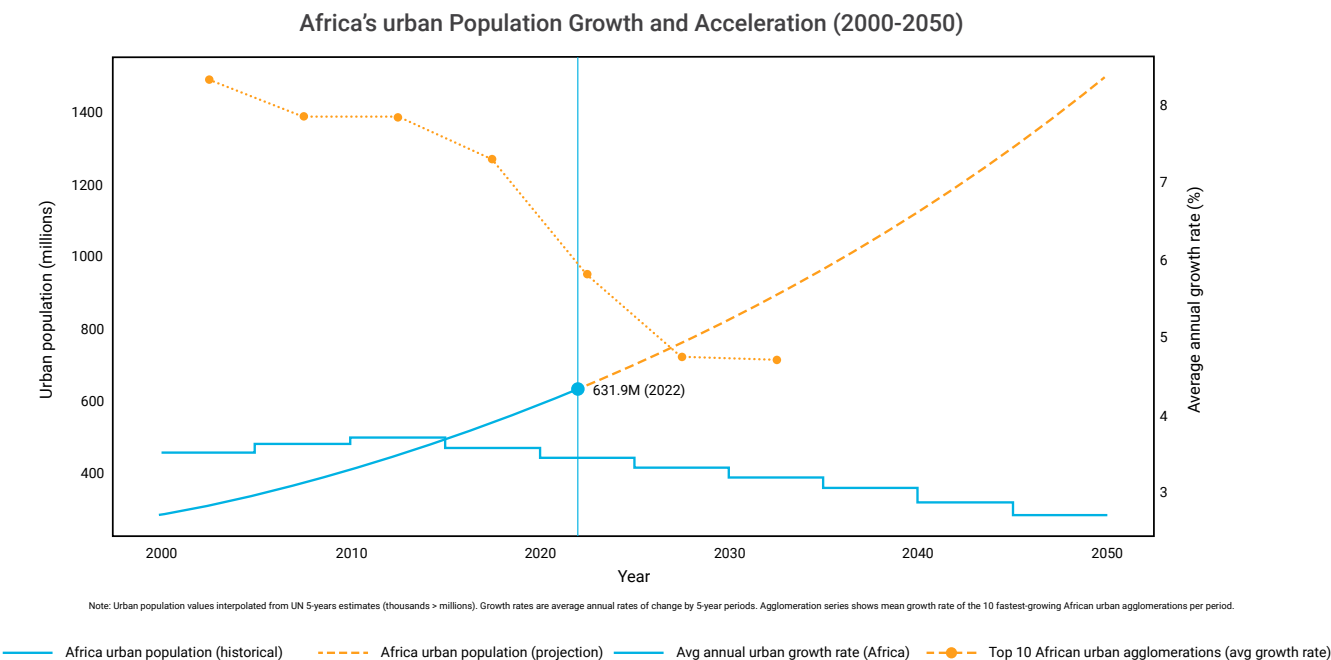
Chapter One

1.1. Introduction

Africa is experiencing the fastest urban transition in human history. Over the next decade, the continent is projected to host an urban demographic majority, and by 2050, over 70% of Africans will live in urban areas.¹

The urban population increased from roughly 280 million in 2000 to about 631.9 million in 2022 and is expected to reach approximately 1.5 billion by 2050. This represents a structural acceleration rather than a temporary demographic shift.

Figure 1. Africa's urban population growth trajectory – 2000-2050



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) World Urbanisation Prospects 2022 and UN-Habitat urban agglomeration growth datasets.

Africa's fastest urbanisation rates are clustered in two geographic corridors: the western Sahel (including Ghana) and the East African sub-region stretching from Ethiopia to Mozambique².

While the overall annual urban growth rate gradually declines as the population base becomes larger, the absolute number of people moving into cities continues to increase significantly.

¹ OECD et al. (2025), Africa's Urbanisation Dynamics 2025: Planning for Urban Expansion, West African Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/2a47845c-en>.

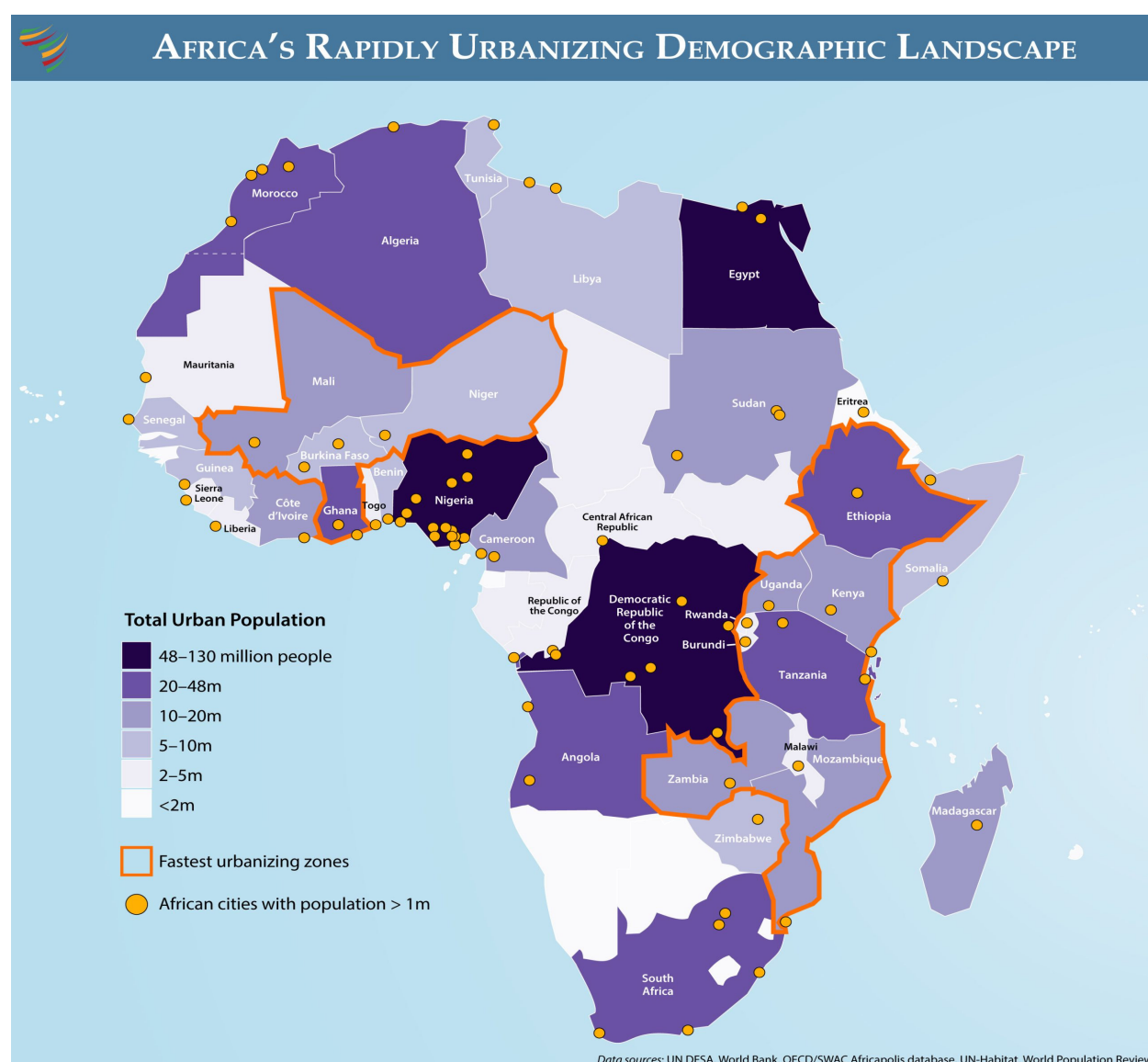
² Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2025). Africa's Unprecedented Urbanization is Shifting the Security Landscape. Africa Center for Strategic Studies. May 12, 2025. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/africa-urban-growth-security/>

Across the continent, urban population growth is largely driven by natural increase, rural-urban migration and, more recently, violent conflict³.

Much of Africa's urban growth is driven by internal migration⁴. While natural population increase is the primary cause for urban increase in Uganda, Ethiopia, and Rwanda, rural-urban migration in search of economic opportunities is the main

reason for the urban growth recorded in Kenya, Tanzania, and Ghana, where capital cities like Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, and Accra offer more access to jobs, education, and services. Cities in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso are experiencing rapid growth largely driven by rural push factors especially conflict, internal displacement, food insecurity, land pressure, and flooding.

Figure 2. Africa's urban growth Profile.



Source: UN DESA, World Bank, OECD/SWAC Africapolis database, UN-Habitat, World Population Review.

³ Ibid.

⁴ OECD et al. (2025), Africa's Urbanisation Dynamics 2025: Planning for Urban Expansion, West African Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/2a47845c-en>

This report assesses progress across the three transformative commitments of the New Urban Agenda between 2022 and 2025 across Sub-Saharan Africa. These are: sustainable urban development for social inclusion and ending poverty; sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all; and environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development⁵. The report focuses on the activities, achievements and potentials for catalysing urban development across the continent in the lead up to the conclusion of the decade of action for the SDGs.

The objective of this report is to provide a comprehensive stocktaking of Africa's urban trajectory via the synthesis of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals between 2022 and 2025. The report:

- evaluates the extent to which member states have integrated the NUA into their National Urban Policies (NUPs) and programmes.
- assesses the impact of urban development initiatives across Sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting best practices and key challenges.
- provides a roadmap for the 2026–2030 period with a focus on ensuring that the urban transitions support the realization of Agenda 2063.

Historically, African urbanisation was viewed through the lens of crisis - characterised by sprawling informal settlements and infrastructure deficits.

However, recent progress reveals a more proactive transition towards targeted, integrated urban planning and governance. This reporting cycle (2022 - 2025) shows that the urban reality is acknowledged and strategically addressed through the increasing institutional prioritisation of urban issues at multi-governance scales. The strategic alignment between the operationalisation of the New Urban Agenda and the African Union's Agenda 2063 are also indicative. The overarching message of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) is that urbanisation is a powerful tool for catalysing sustainable development, while Agenda 2063 recognises cities as pivotal to Africa's structural transformation.

The years 2022–2025 were defined by a paradigm shift in how urban growth is managed across Africa. The reporting period was marked by global and regional events with significant urban footfalls. Emerging from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, African cities faced a polycrisis of climate-induced disasters, economic pressures, and geopolitical shifts⁶. Devastating floods in the Sahel and rising sea levels threatened coastal megacities like Lagos and Dar es Salaam⁷. As such, climate change moved from a peripheral concern to the heart of African urban policy⁸, with a resultant surge of 'green grey' infrastructure projects.

The most significant progress during 2022–2025 occurred in the "Means of Implementation." Through Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), cities are now reporting directly on their SDG and NUA progress. This bottom-up approach to governance is fostering a new culture of accountability at sub-national levels.

5 United Nations (2017). New Urban Agenda. United Nations. ISBN: 978-92-1-132731-1. <https://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/NUA-English.pdf>

6 Lawal, S.A. (2025). Polycrisis and the attainment of sustainable development goals in Africa. PolyCIVIS. September 2025. <https://civis.eu/storage/files/9-lawal-polycrisis-and-sdgs-in-africa-v2-sep-2025.pdf>

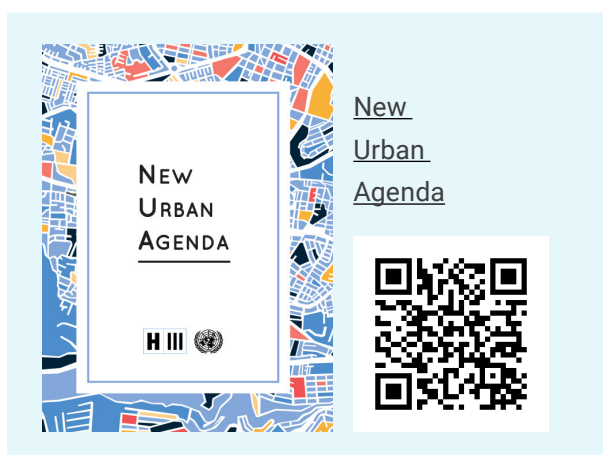
7 Mishra, V. (2025). In Africa's Sahel, conflict and climate change force millions from their homes. United Nations. October 10, 2025. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/10/1166076>

8 Lotsmart Fonjong, Frank Matose, David A. Sonnenfeld, Climate change in Africa: Impacts, adaptation, and policy responses, Global Environmental Change, Volume 89, 2024, 102912, ISSN 0959-3780, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2024.102912>

Furthermore, by aligning national budgets with urban priorities, countries like **Nigeria** and **Côte d'Ivoire** are demonstrating how to bridge the gap between policy and municipal finance.

Despite these broad achievements, there is still a wide implementation gap in many secondary and tertiary cities, due to limited technical capacity and financial resources compared to larger primate cities. The finance gap remains the single largest barrier, with many cities still overly dependent on central government transfers. Additionally, the proliferation of organised armed violence in urban areas, particularly in conflict zones like Sudan, has introduced new security dimensions to urban management.

The progress documented in the following chapters suggests that while the challenges are immense, the political will and technical innovation required to master the urban transition is growing. This report serves as both a record of progress and a call to action to ensure that Africa's cities become the engines of prosperity, dignity, and resilience envisioned in both the New Urban Agenda and Agenda 2063.



1.2. New Urban Agenda – A brief overview

The New Urban Agenda (NUA), adopted in 2016 at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) provides a comprehensive roadmap for rethinking the way we plan, manage, and inhabit cities. As the world becomes increasingly urbanised - with nearly 70 per cent of the global population projected to live in cities by 2050 - the NUA serves as the essential qualitative “toolbox” for achieving the urban dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁹.

To understand the NUA, one must first look at the trajectory of global urban policy as there was a shift in global understanding of urbanisation between Habitat II conference in Istanbul (1996) and Habitat III in Quito (2016).

By 2016, world leaders recognized urbanisation as a transformative force for development. If managed well, it can drive economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection.

The NUA was thus developed as an action-oriented framework to guide urban development. It was formally endorsed by the UN General Assembly in December 2016, including all 54 African countries, thus cementing its status as the global framework for catalysing sustainable urbanisation.

At the heart of the NUA is the concept of the “Right to the City”,¹⁰ which envisions cities as common goods where all inhabitants - present and future, permanent and temporary - can live with dignity and equal access to opportunities¹¹.

9 United Nations (2017). New Urban Agenda. United Nations. ISBN: 978-92-1-132731-1. <https://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/NUA-English.pdf>

10 Cities Forum (2023). What is New Urban Agenda? Cities Forum. April 10, 2023. <https://www.citiesforum.org/news/what-is-new-urban-agenda/#:~:text=%20The%20New%20Urban%20Agenda%20presents,urban%20legislation%20and%20regulations%2C%20urban>

11 SDG Knowledge Hub (2016). The “Right to the City” and the New Urban Agenda. SDG Knowledge Hub. July 12, 2016. <https://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/policy-briefs/the-right-to-the-city-and-the-new-urban-agenda/#:~:text=From%20the%20perspective%20of%20this,of%20this%20notion%20highlight%2C%20in>



This NUA is anchored on three transformative commitments namely:

- **Sustainable urban development for social inclusion and ending poverty:** The agenda prioritises leaving no one and no place behind. It calls for equal access, for all, to basic services, including housing, safe drinking water, sanitation, and modern energy. It focuses on the most vulnerable, ensuring that urban development does not exacerbate marginalisation or displacement.
- **Sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all:** Recognising cities as engines of growth, the NUA encourages economic development that is inclusive. This involves supporting the informal economy, fostering innovation, and ensuring that the economic gains of urbanisation are shared fairly among all residents.
- **Environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development:** As cities account for approximately 70 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, the NUA pushes for low-carbon, climate-resilient urban development. It advocates for protecting biodiversity, reducing air pollution, and improving disaster risk management.

Implementing the NUA is through a structural framework that encompasses six interdependent priority means: national urban policies, planning and management of spatial development, building urban governance structures, urban legislation, rules and regulations, financing systems and management capacities, and local implementation of the NUA. There have been varying degrees of progress across all these dimensions across Africa.

While the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹² set the quantitative targets (the “what”), the New Urban Agenda provides the qualitative guidance (the “how”). The NUA is particularly linked to SDG 11, which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

However, as urbanisation is cross-cutting, the NUA supports the implementation of all SDGs at the urban scale. The NUA challenges governments at all levels - national, subnational, and local - to reconsider the physical form and governance of their cities. By focusing on the science of cities, the NUA provides the tools to transform urban spaces from sites of inequality into hubs of innovation and well-being.

The success of the NUA depends on its local implementation - the ability of local governments and citizens to take targeted, sustainable, people-centred, responsive, and integrated local actions. In Africa, the NUA was adapted into a specific regional framework: the *Harmonized*. This is in order to ensure the integration of local cultural, social, and economic contexts.

12 United Nations (2015). Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. A/RES/70/1. <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

Box 1. Harmonized Implementation Framework for the New Urban Agenda in Africa

The framework is a structured, coordinated approach to translating global urban commitments into practical and measurable action for Africa. It was jointly developed by UN-Habitat, the African Union Commission, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. The Framework responds to Africa's rapid and complex urban transition by aligning the NUA with African Union's Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. It was developed to address fragmentation in urban policy implementation and reporting and to ensure coherence between global commitments and regional priorities.

It provides Member States with a common reference point and guide for integrating NUA principles into national urban policies, development strategies, and local planning instruments. It reduces duplication of efforts and strengthens alignment across the SDGs, Agenda 2063 and national development frameworks by harmonising monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

The framework recognises that sustainable urban development is realised at the local level, and it promotes multilevel governance, institutional capacity development, and inclusive planning processes. Also, it supports cities and local governments in adopting participatory approaches, strengthening municipal finance systems, improving service delivery, enhancing climate resilience, and leveraging data for evidence-based decision-making.

The framework also fosters peer learning and regional cooperation by providing platforms for knowledge exchange, technical assistance, and capacity building.

It ensures that Africa's implementation of the NUA is coherent, context-responsive, and results-oriented, through coordinated action, shared indicators, and strengthened partnerships. This advances inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable urban development across the continent.

Source: UN-Habitat, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, and African Union Commission (2020).

1.3. Strategic role of cities for sustainable urban development in Africa

While rapid urban expansion may present critical challenges, it also positions African cities as the primary engines for the continent's sustainable development. Therefore, African cities can go beyond being passive hubs of habitation to strategic drivers of economic, social, and environmental progress. By agglomerating both talent and capital, urban centers can catalyse innovation in renewable energy, digital finance, and circular waste management.

Given that much of Africa's urbanisation does not fit traditional industrialization contexts, African cities also have the opportunity to leapfrog directly into sustainable led growth by leveraging technology, innovation and the human capital development.

Cities like Johannesburg, Cape Town, Cairo, Nairobi, and Lagos are already responsible for a significant share of their countries' gross domestic products (GDPs)¹³. Other cities such as Addis Ababa are leveraging the 'green economy' by converting urban waste to energy, simultaneously addressing twin challenges of sanitation and power deficits.

13 Eghosa, F. (2026). The richest cities in Africa: Rankings by different criteria. Techpoint. March 25, 2025. <https://techpoint.africa/guide/the-richest-cities-in-africa/>

Many African cities are vulnerable to climate change, facing risks from rising sea levels to extreme heat¹⁴. While there are many micro-level place-based adaptation measures using indigenous knowledge systems, many cities are also pioneering nature-based solutions. Integrating green spaces and “sponge city” designs (green spaces and wetlands) helps manage stormwater and reduce the urban heat island effect.

Furthermore, compact urban planning reduces the carbon footprint by minimising travel distances, while making mass transit systems such as the bus rapid transit (BRT) or light rail, economically viable.

With over 50% of urban residents living in informal settlements¹⁵, African cities are also sites of socio-economic inequality and multidimensional poverty. Approaches for urban upgrading, participatory governance (including integrating traditional institutions) and catalysing small businesses and MSMEs, are strategic for producing sustainable urbanisation at scale.

These would help to improve access to essential public services for under-served communities and ensuring that growth is equitably distributed and diffused. Cities are also catalysing targeted actions to increase life chances and access for vulnerable groups especially people with disabilities, women, refugees and internally displaced persons.

The future of Africa is undeniably urban. By treating cities as strategic assets, the continent can harness urbanisation to drive a resilient and prosperous future. Success hinges on whether urban leaders can balance rapid population growth with proactive economic development priorities, environmental stewardship and social inclusivity.

1.4. Sustainable urbanisation in sub-Saharan Africa – matters arising

Ten Years of the NUA in Africa: Where are we? What has been achieved?

A decade into the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, African cities are facing accelerated urban growth alongside endemic challenges. While there has been notable progress in elevating urban issues on policy agendas and adopting national urban policies and planning frameworks, some significant gaps persist.

These gaps include large housing deficits, widespread informality, and unequal access to basic services. Concurrently, emerging pressures such as rapid population growth, urban youth bulge, rising unemployment and underemployment rates, and increasing exposure to climate risks are intensifying urban vulnerabilities.

Overall, progress remains uneven across sub-regions and urban typology. While there has been more rapid growth in secondary and tertiary cities, this has been accompanied by the urbanisation of poverty and increasing vulnerability to climate impacts, violent conflict and slow post-pandemic recovery. Larger cities on the other hand have been able to attract more foreign direct investments, thus achieving more results in innovation, technology and industrial growth.

Lessons learnt and recovery and resilience of African cities post COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic was a stress test for African cities, exposing deep structural vulnerabilities while simultaneously catalysing

14 Ansah, E.W., Amoah, M., Obeng, P. et al. Climate change, urban vulnerabilities and adaptation in Africa: a scoping review. *Climatic Change* 177, 71 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-024-03711-8>

15 Orkpeh, A. K., & Adedire, F. M. (2024). African urban peripheries and informal development: A review of challenges and sustainable approaches to inclusive cities. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 78(1), 40–53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00291951.2024.2325446>

urban innovation¹⁶. As the continent moves through the recovery phase, the transition from vulnerability to resilience has become a central theme.

The pandemic highlighted the need to understand and respond effectively to urban poverty and its consequences¹⁷. During the pandemic, High population density in slums made social distancing practically impossible¹⁸, while the lockdowns amplified economic challenges and social vulnerabilities such as gender-based violence¹⁹.

Inadequate access to basic services (especially water and sanitation) made centralised pandemic responses largely ineffective for the urban poor. The pandemic showed that urban health and well-being are inseparable from access to adequate housing and sustainable livelihoods. Post-COVID recovery has not been uniform across countries²⁰.

However, digital acceleration and climate agenda have been a catalyst for faster integration. Rwanda was able to leverage ICT for vaccine distribution and digital livelihood adoption by MSMEs²¹.

Many national governments are increasingly linking COVID recovery funds to climate goals²². For example, Nigeria's post -COVID plan includes installing solar home systems for 5 million households to build energy resilience, which will result in co-benefits for economy and environment²³. Post-pandemic resilience in Africa is also defined by multi-hazard preparedness²⁴.

According to the African Union's Urban Resilience Knowledge Series (2025), cities are moving toward: decentralised governance (empowering local community leaders who proved more effective at managing local crises than distant national bureaucracies) and nature-based solutions (using green infrastructure to manage health (heatwaves) and environmental (flooding (risks)). In cities like Freetown, the "Freetown the Treetown" initiative²⁵ has mobilised local ward committees to plant and track over a million trees to combat erosion and urban heat. Similarly, Dakar has pioneered the use of micro-forests and permeable urban design to mitigate seasonal flooding while fostering neighborhood-level stewardship of public spaces²⁶.

16 Conduah, A.K., Ofoe, S.H. Community resilience and adaptation strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic in Sub-Saharan Africa: a comparative analysis of Ghana and South Africa. *Discov Health Systems* 4, 42 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44250-025-00220-y>

17 Africa Policy Research Institute. (2025). Pandemic preparedness in African Countries: Status quo and the way forward. APRI - Africa Policy Research Institute, Berlin, Germany. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59184/pb025.01>

18 Anand Sahasranaman, Henrik Jeldtoft Jensen; Spread of COVID-19 in urban neighbourhoods and slums of the developing world. *J R Soc Interface* 1 January 2021; 18 (174): 20200599. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsif.2020.0599>

19 United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2023). Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on African economies. pp 49-73. In *Economic Report on Africa 2023*. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. December 2023. <https://doi.org/10.18356/9789213586341c007>

20 Mishra, A. (2020). Africa and COVID-19: Impact, Response, and Challenges to Recovery. ORF Occasional Paper No. 275, September 2020, Observer Research Foundation. <https://www.orfonline.org/public/uploads/posts/pdf/20230720132428.pdf>

21 UNICEF, WHO, and GAVI (No date). Case Study Rwanda: daLeveraging the existing digital infrastructure for the covid-19 vaccination response. World Health Organization. https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/rwanda_case_study_digital-solutions_en1672760274.pdf

22 Kedir, A Odhiambo, S., Murinde, V. (2024). African Economies: Recovery Agenda from Multiple Shocks. *Journal of African Economies*, Volume 33, Issue Supplement_2, December 2024, Pages ii3–ii7, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jae/ejae025>

23 Nigerian Government (2020). National COVID-19 Pandemic Multi-Sectoral Response Plan. August 14, 2020. https://statehouse.gov.ng/covid19/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/National-COVID-19-Multi-Sectoral-Pandemic-Response-Plan_Post-MTR_September-2020.pdf

24 Africa Policy Research Institute. (2025). Pandemic preparedness in African Countries: Status quo and the way forward. APRI - Africa Policy Research Institute, Berlin, Germany. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59184/pb025.01>

25 Freetown the Treetown. <https://sdglocalaction.org/freetown-the-treetown/>

26 <https://mirror.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=10291&catid=271&typeid=73>

In addition, the Municipal Council of Beira, with the support of the Netherlands government, UN-Habitat, and the Arcadis Shelter Programme, developed the Beira Municipal Recovery and Resilience Plan, a post-cyclone recovery programme in Mozambique focused on community-managed drainage canals and solar-powered local grids²⁷.

1.5. Methodology

The methodology for this progress report on the NUA in Africa (2022–2025) was designed to ensure a high level of evidentiary integrity, regional balance, and thematic depth. The study adopts a multi-layered, document-grounded approach that prioritises official state-led reporting while supplementing it with institutional and academic rigour. The data collection process followed a strict hierarchy of evidence to maintain the political and technical legitimacy of the report. The report relied on:

- Primary National Evidence from National New Urban Agenda (NUA) Country Reports, Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR), and Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- UN Institutional Datasets and syntheses from United Nations Habitat (UN-Habitat), the African Union Commission (AUC), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

- Supplementary Evidence from other multilateral organisation databases, as well as peer-reviewed academic literature. Where gaps were identified in country-level reporting or specific thematic areas (such as niche climate adaptation metrics), the methodology integrated reports from the World Bank, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and peer-reviewed academic literature.

This analysis draws on a broad set of evidence sources documenting the implementation of the SDGs and New Urban Agenda across Sub-Saharan Africa. The analysis covers countries across West, East, Southern, and Central Africa. North African countries were excluded from the scope of this report.²⁸

In total, 45 countries informed the analysis, drawing on multiple evidence types including Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), national NUA progress reports, UN-Habitat regional analyses, Multidimensional Poverty Index datasets, and other institutional reports. Eight countries provided Voluntary Local Reviews, covering 23 cities and local jurisdictions, including Accra, Yaoundé, Mbabane, Cape Town, Tshwane, Ngara District, Victoria Falls, and sixteen municipalities in Mozambique.

These local reviews provided additional insights into city-level implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

27 The Water Diplomat (2024). Rehabilitating Beira: towards a more resilient coastal city. May 3, 2024. <https://www.waterdiplomat.org/story/2024/05/rehabilitating-beira-towards-more-resilient-coastal-city>

28 North African countries are analysed in the NUA Report for MENA region.

Table 3. Data Sources for the NUA Report

Region	Country	Evidence Sources Used	Cities / Local Jurisdictions
Central Africa	Angola	MPI National Results; NUA Implementation Sub-Saharan Africa	—
	Cameroon	Habitat III Implementation Report; Voluntary National Review; MPI National Results; VLR	Yaoundé
	Central African Republic	MPI Analysis; MPI National Results	—
	Chad	MPI Analysis; MPI National Results	—
	Congo (Republic)	MPI Analysis; MPI National Results	—
	Democratic Republic of Congo	Voluntary National Review; NUA Implementation Report	—
	Equatorial Guinea	Business Regulatory Inventory; Urban Population Database	—
	Gabon	Business Regulatory Inventory; MPI National Results	—
	Sao Tome and Principe	MPI Analysis; MPI National Results	—
West Africa	Benin	MPI National Results; NUA Implementation Sub-Saharan Africa	—
	Burkina Faso	NUA Voluntary Report; MPI National Results; MUH National Report	—
	Côte d'Ivoire	Voluntary National Review; MPI National Results; NUA Implementation Report	—
	Gambia	Voluntary National Review; MPI National Results	—
	Ghana	NUA Progress Report; Ghana Statistical Service; VNR; VLR	Accra
	Guinea	UN-Habitat Regional Analysis; MPI National Results	—
	Guinea-Bissau	UN-Habitat Regional Analysis; MPI National Results	—
	Liberia	UN-Habitat Regional Analysis; MPI National Results	—
	Mali	Voluntary National Review; MPI National Results	—
	Mauritania	MPI Analysis; MPI National Results	—
	Niger	UN-Habitat Regional Analysis; MPI National Results	—
	Nigeria	NUA Voluntary Report; National NUA Commitments Report	—
	Senegal	NUA Voluntary Report; MPI National Results	—
	Sierra Leone	Voluntary National Review; MPI National Results	—
	Togo	MPI Analysis; MPI National Results	—
Southern Africa	Botswana	NUA Voluntary Report; MPI National Results; MIHD National Report	—
	Eswatini	Voluntary National Review; MPI National Results; NUA Implementation Report; VLR	Mbabane
	Lesotho	Voluntary National Review; MPI National Results	—
	Namibia	UN-Habitat Regional Analysis; MPI National Results	—
	South Africa	NUA Country Report; MPI National Results; VLR	Cape Town; Tshwane
	Zambia	Voluntary National Review; MPI National Results	—
	Zimbabwe	Voluntary National Review; MPI National Results; VLR	Victoria Falls

East Africa	Burundi	UN-Habitat Regional Analysis; MPI National Results	—
	Comoros	MPI Analysis; MPI National Results	—
	Ethiopia	Habitat III Regional Analysis; MPI National Results	—
	Kenya	NUA National Progress Report; MPI National Results; VLR reference	—
	Madagascar	UN-Habitat Regional Analysis; MPI National Results	—
	Malawi	NUA National Update Report; MPI National Results	—
	Mauritius	Voluntary National Review; Urban Population Dataset	—
	Mozambique	MPI Analysis; MPI National Results; VLR	16 Municipalities
	Rwanda	Voluntary National Review; MPI National Results	—
	Seychelles	Voluntary National Review; MPI National Results	—
	Somalia	Business Regulatory Inventory; Urban Population Dataset	—
	South Sudan	Business Regulatory Inventory; Urban Population Dataset	—
	Tanzania	NUA Second Implementation Report; MPI National Results	—
	Uganda	NUA National Report; MPI National Results; VLR	Ngora District

To ensure a granular understanding of the African urban landscape, the data was categorised across three distinct dimensions:

- Regional segmentation: (West, Central, East, and Southern Africa) to account for sub-regional contexts, economic structures, and urbanisation rates.
- Urban hierarchies: Metropolitan hubs and megacities, large cities, and secondary or small cities to account for the various typologies of human settlements
- Thematic alignment: Data points were mapped directly to the three transformative commitments of the NUA.

In response to the large volume of data generated between 2022 and 2025, the study adopted artificial intelligence (via Google NotebookLM) as a primary tool for data-grounded evidence management. The AI tool was used to extract verbatim evidence and qualitative indicators from hundreds of uploaded primary documents, ensuring that the “voice” of the reporting country remained intact. Every extracted data point was assigned to metadata, including country, city, year, and specific source reference, enabling immediate verification. The AI supported the descriptive

comparison of progress across different city sizes and regional clusters, identifying patterns that might be overlooked in a manual review. By mapping the data extracted from the country’s reports, the tool also identified themes and geographic areas that were under-represented in current reporting. A critical function involved distinguishing between relative indicators (percentages) and absolute values to prevent the misinterpretation of progress across varying scales of urban population. This enabled effective ground-truthing of the trends outlined.

Chapter Two: Progress made in the transformative commitments for sustainable urban development

2.1. Sustainable urban development for social inclusion and ending poverty

Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions

Globally, 1.2 billion people lived in multidimensional poverty in 2022²⁹. Despite policy commitments under the NUA and the SDGs to eradicate poverty, it continues to persist in African cities, Chad has the highest rate of multi-dimensional poverty while Seychelles has the lowest. Approximately 460 million people across the African continent live below the international extreme poverty line of US\$1.90 daily, with marked regional disparities of around 65% in Central Africa compared to 29.6% in Southern Africa.

In 2024, about 145 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa were categorised as working poor³⁰, underscoring the persistence of informal employment, under-employment, in-work poverty and the structural vulnerabilities of the urban labour markets. The manifestation of urban poverty across Africa is further evidenced through the prevalence of slums and informal settlements.

Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most affected region globally, with an estimated 53.6% of urban residents living in slum-like conditions as of 2022. Across West Africa, poverty eradication efforts are increasingly embedded within national urban policies and slum upgrading frameworks. However, high levels of informality and service deficits continue to define urban poverty patterns. In Nigeria, over half of the urban population lives in slums, with the slum population increasing from 21.9 million in 1990 to 56.2 million in 2018 and remaining above 50% in many cities. Similarly, in Freetown, Sierra Leone, slum prevalence remained above 50%. On the other hand, progress was recorded in Ghana, where urban multidimensional poverty declined from 22.9% in 2022 to 16.0% in 2023³¹.

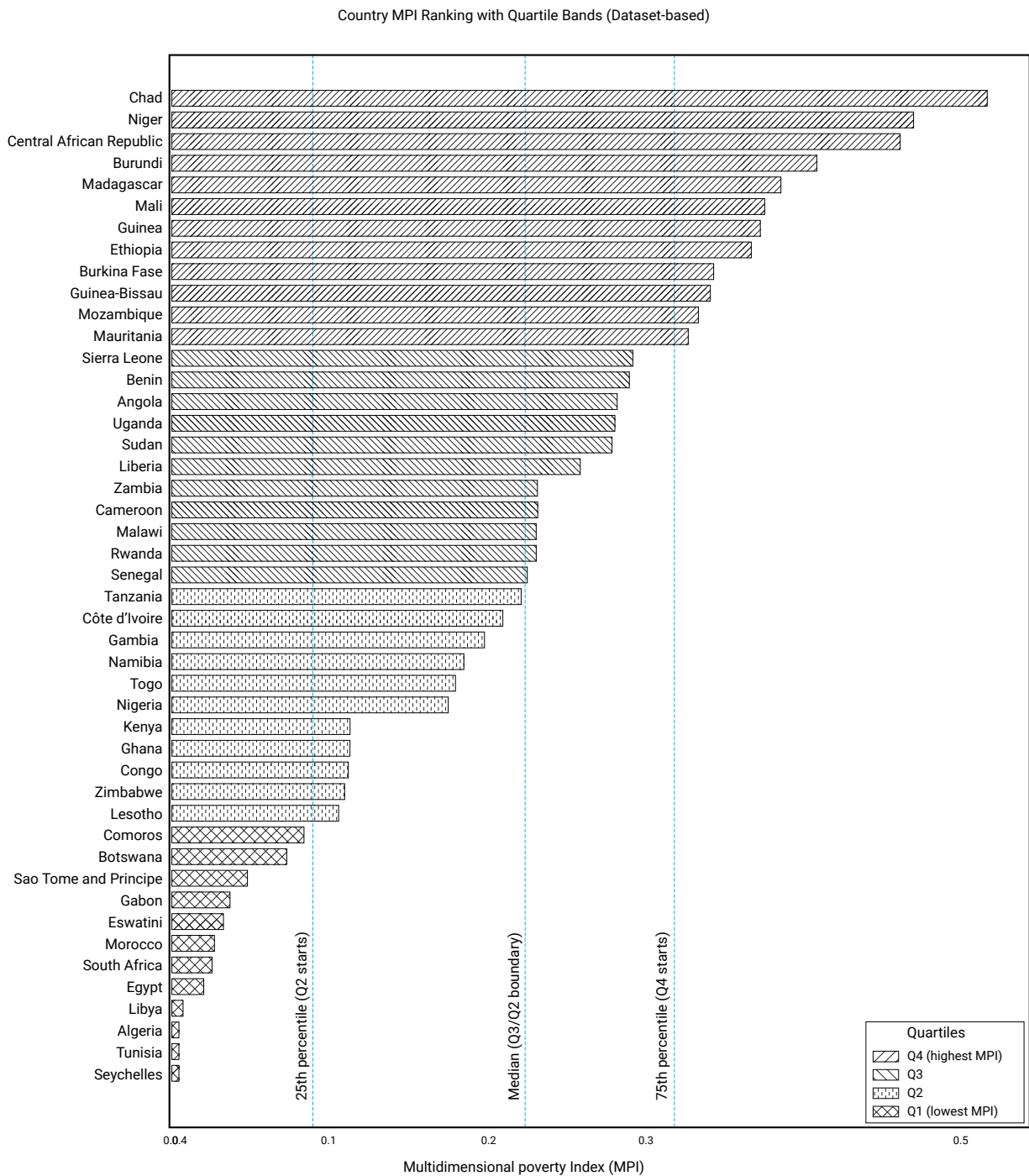
Even though national slum prevalence is 30.7%, about half of Accra's population reside in informal settlements. In Liberia, slum prevalence declined proportionally from 75.5% in 2001 to 60.5% in 2022, yet rapid demographic growth has sustained high absolute numbers of residents in precarious settlements. The piloting of "sustainable cities" in five urban centres however signals a strategic shift toward integrated urban renewal actions on housing and waste management interventions aimed at reducing systemic urban poverty.

29 United Nations Development Programme and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (2022). Unpacking Deprivation Bundles to reduce Multidimensional Poverty. <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdp-document/2022mpireporten.pdf>

30 United Nations Statistics Division (2024). The Sustainable Development Goals Extended Report 2024. https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/extended-report/Extended-Report_Goal-1.pdf

31 Country Progress Report on the Implementation of the NUA, 2025. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/node/2740>

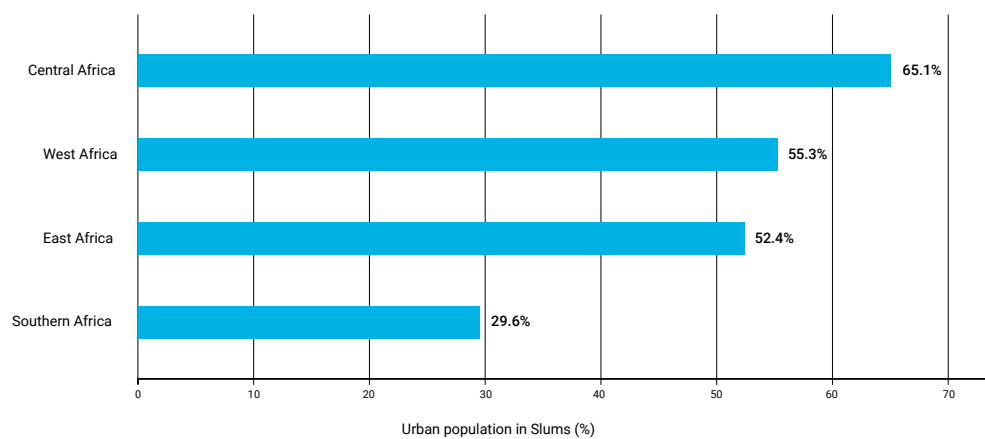
Figure 4. Multidimensional Poverty Across Sub-Saharan Africa (MPI Ranking and Quartile Classification)³²



Source: Analysis based on Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) National Results dataset (UNDP & Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative), latest available survey years per country.

32 Ranking countries by MPI reveals clear stratification, with a distinct upper quartile of high-poverty contexts facing compound deprivations

Figure 5. Regional distribution of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa

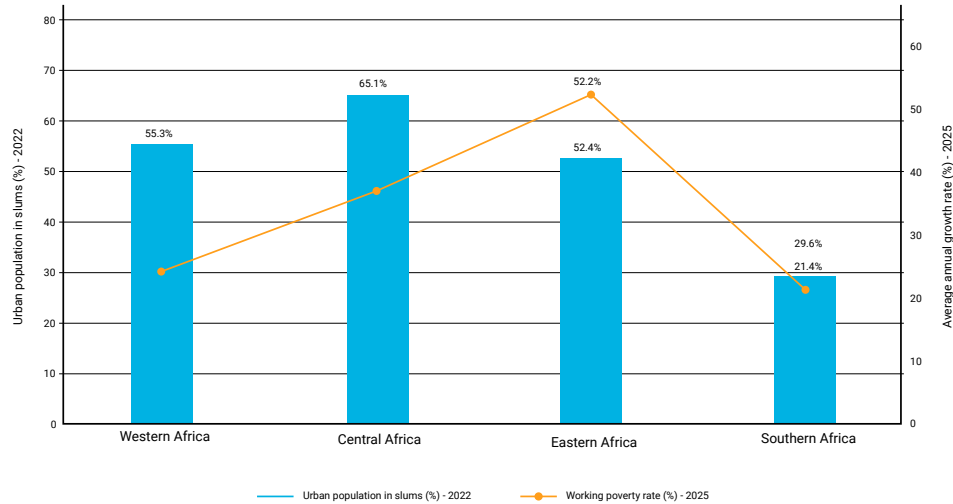


Source: Regional Distribution of Urban Poverty in Africa

Central and Western Africa record the highest levels of housing informality, while Eastern Africa exhibits the highest working poverty rate. Southern Africa shows comparatively lower slum prevalence, though labour precarity remains significant. The divergence between housing deprivation and labour poverty across regions underscores the uneven progress in translating

urban growth into inclusive economic outcomes. While the slum prevalence declined prior to 2020, it rose sharply after the COVID-19 pandemic and is slowly reducing due in part to targeted actions for urban upgrading, water and sanitation infrastructure particularly in secondary and smaller cities.

Figure 6. Regional comparison of urban slum prevalence (2022) and working poverty rates (2025) in sub-Saharan Africa³³



Source: Data on working poverty and urban population in slums

33 Figure 5 presents a regional comparison between urban slum prevalence (2022) and projected working poverty rates (2025) across Sub-Saharan Africa. Slum prevalence reflects the proportion of urban residents living in informal or inadequate housing conditions, while working poverty captures the share of employed individuals living below the international poverty line. Together, these indicators illustrate the structural relationship between housing informality and labour vulnerability in the region.

Other west African countries, including Senegal and Mali are strengthening national development strategies, including structured slum reabsorption programmes. Despite policy advances, fiscal decentralisation gaps, youth unemployment and limited disaggregated data continue to constrain implementation across the subregion.

In East Africa, rapid urbanisation remains the dominant driver of poverty dynamics. Cities such as Nairobi, Addis Ababa, and Dar es Salaam continue to expand rapidly, intensifying pressure on housing, infrastructure, and employment. Although some countries have recorded proportional declines in slum prevalence, demographic growth has led to rising absolute numbers of urban residents living in informal conditions.

In Burundi, slum prevalence declined from 79.7% in 2001 to 36.8% in 2022, yet the number of residents living in slums increased from 442,000 to 672,000 during the same period. The implementation of the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme as a central mechanism for addressing multidimensional poverty by strengthening urban profiling and inclusive planning is limited by municipal finance, weak land management systems, and institutional capacity gaps.

Central Africa had some of the highest poverty and slum prevalence rates on the African continent. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the share of the urban population living in slum conditions increased from 74.8% in 2015 to 78.4% in 2022, representing 34.9 million people living in precarious environments. Urban poverty in major cities such as Kinshasa is closely associated with high informality, infrastructure deficits, and limited livelihood opportunities.

Sao Tome and Principe recorded one of the highest slum prevalence rates in the world, estimated at 82.4%. This proportion corresponds to approximately 142,000 of 193,000 urban residents, illustrating the distinction between proportional and absolute measures. The report for the subregion emphasised strengthening urban governance, improving land tenure security, and expanding access to essential services as prerequisites for poverty eradication, yet structural constraints coupled with limited fiscal space and weak statistical systems continue to impede sustained progress.

Comparatively, Southern Africa demonstrates the most structured approach to multi-dimensional poverty, often integrating urban planning with extensive social safety nets, stronger institutional frameworks and clearer poverty diagnostics, particularly countries like South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia. The sub-region is characterised by institutionalising spatial justice frameworks aimed at dismantling the persistent urban segregation. South Africa combines immediate relief, such as the Social Relief of Distress Grant, with long-term urban transformation through the social housing programmes and report shows that the poverty rate in the country declined to 37.9% in 2023³⁴.

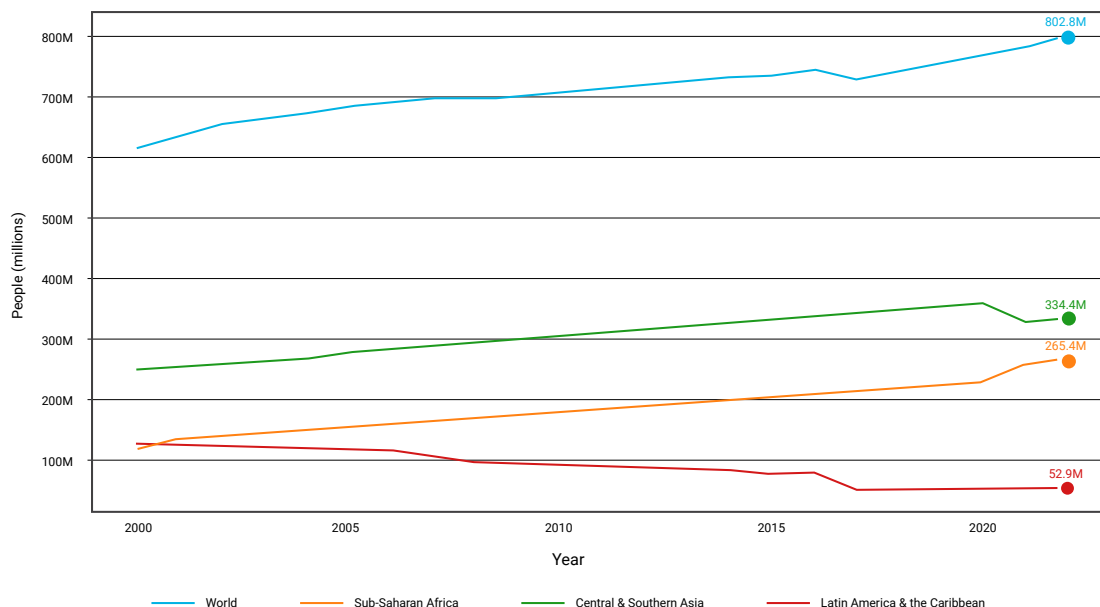
Namibia's focus is on data-driven informal settlement upgrading using GIS to map informal areas for targeted resource allocation, while Botswana focused on addressing youth unemployment and enhancing social protection³⁵. Despite these advancements, the sub-region faces a "growth-poverty paradox". In Zambia, for example, recent reclassification as a low-income country highlights how macroeconomic volatility can erase urban gains, as urban poverty there spiked to 32% in 2022, which is higher than in earlier years.

34 South Africa NUA Country Report. <https://www.sacities.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/SA-NUA-REPORT-final-15122022-compressed.pdf>

35 Botswana UN Cooperation Framework (2022 - 2026). https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Botswana_Cooperation_Framework_2022-2026.pdf

The common challenge across the sub-region remains the high cost of urban living and growing unemployment.

Figure 7. Urban Population Living in Slums or Informal Settlements (Millions), 2000–2022



Source: Urban Population living in Slums or Informal Settlements

Across the four African subregions, common patterns emerge, including the persistence of informal settlements, rising absolute numbers of urban poor due to demographic growth, constrained municipal finance, and limited disaggregated urban poverty data. West Africa demonstrates expanding policy alignment but faces significant slum prevalence and service gaps. East Africa is shaped by rapid urban growth and rising absolute vulnerability despite proportional improvements. Central Africa faces the deepest structural poverty burdens and institutional fragility. Southern Africa shows comparatively stronger institutionalization and monitoring capacity but continues to grapple with inequality and economic constraints.

Building peaceful, inclusive and participatory societies

Between 2022 and 2025, Africa countries significantly accelerated the localisation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA), shifting from high-level policy commitments toward decentralised and participatory governance models. The establishment of the Africa Union Urban Forum in 2022 further promoted structured dialogue across Member States, and in 2024 the integration of the Harmonised Regional Framework for the NUA reinforced commitments to people-centred planning and strengthened accountability mechanisms at both national and subnational levels.

Box 2. The Africa Union Urban Forum and Participatory Governance

In 2022, the African Union (AU) Commission and its Member States established the Africa Urban Forum, a landmark continental platform designed to address the challenges of rapid urbanisation. This initiative aligns directly with the Harmonised Regional Framework for Implementing the New Urban Agenda in Africa (See Box 1).

The forum represents a strategic shift toward a “whole-of-society” approach, ensuring that Africa’s urban transformation is not only sustainable but deeply rooted in participatory governance.

The forum’s core mission is to elevate the profile of urbanisation as a driver of Africa’s structural transformation. Central to this is the promotion of inclusive and participatory human settlement development. By facilitating high-level dialogues among heads of states, local authorities, and civil society, the forum creates a mechanism for all voices, including the marginalized and vulnerable, to influence urban policy. This participatory model is essential for addressing the “urban divide”, where rapid growth often leads to spatial inequality and social exclusion.

At the 2022 High-Level Meeting on the New Urban Agenda and the subsequent Addis Ababa Declaration, the forum emphasized the following as strategic commitments

- **Decentralised Governance:** Strengthening the capacity of local governments to manage urban growth transparently.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Utilising “Urban Weeks” and regional forums to co-create solutions with the private sector, academia, and NGOs.
- **Accountability:** Establishing monitoring frameworks to track progress on inclusive service delivery and climate resilience.

Source: African Union³⁶

The institutionalisation of inclusive governance is increasing in West Africa subregion. The reports highlight multi-stakeholder urban forums, legislative reforms promoting transparency, and initiatives that recognise residents of informal settlements as legitimate partners in the planning process (Ghana). However, the narrative of inclusivity in the sub-region is inextricably linked to conflict sensitivity and resilience.

As at March 2023, about 3.1 million people in the Sahel had been displaced from their homes. Urban violence is also prevalent as over 50% of urban residents in Burkina Faso and Senegal experience

everyday violence in their neighborhoods. These conditions have reinforced the emphasis on urban safety, peacebuilding, and urban governance, prompting increased attention to spatial justice, equitable service delivery, and safety-oriented urban design.

In East Africa, rapid urbanisation has intensified the emphasis on decentralisation and citizen engagement as prerequisites for inclusive societies. Examples include Uganda and Kenya which have adopted City and Local Urban Forums to elevate citizens’ voices³⁷ in urban decision-making.

³⁶ <https://au.int/en/newsevents/africa-urban-forum>

³⁷ Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development. (2025). *Uganda National Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Page 4.

In Kigali and Nairobi, Urban Living Labs and digital participatory budgeting initiatives have strengthened youth engagement and innovation-driven governance³⁸. The framework in Tanzania mandates community inputs at the neighbourhood level through *mitaa* (neighbourhood) committees³⁹, while the government of Malawi initiated comprehensive reforms for devolution of political and administrative authority from the central government to local government authorities⁴⁰.

Across East Africa, participatory slum profiling and upgrading exercises are often cited as co-production initiatives and mechanisms for building trust between municipal authorities and informal settlement communities. Examples include the second phase of the Kenya Informal Settlements Improvement Project (KISIP 2)⁴¹ and home-grown solutions to foster social cohesion within urban planning in Rwanda called Umuganda⁴². Nonetheless, limited fiscal autonomy and capacity gaps at local government levels continue to constrain the depth of participation.

Central Africa is in at the foundational stage of building peaceful and inclusive institutions. Efforts by Democratic Republic of Congo and Sao Tome and Principe are aimed at strengthening transparency, formalising civil society engagement, and enhancing community participation in land use and service delivery decisions. Given historical patterns of fragility and conflict in parts of the subregion, participatory governance is frequently framed as a peacebuilding tool for rebuilding institutional trust and social cohesion.

However, limited fiscal space, weak institutional capacity, and gaps in reliable, disaggregated data continue to slow down the operationalisation of participatory mechanisms at scale.

In Southern Africa, multi-stakeholder consultation processes are largely embedded within national urban policy formulation. South Africa's National Urban Forum processes involved broad consultations across government, academia, civil society, and the private sector, reinforcing participatory planning as a means of addressing spatial inequality and social exclusion.

Lesotho reports collaborative, multi-institutional reporting teams that included government ministries, academia and local authorities, while Eswatini utilises Social Services Forums as mediating platforms between national priorities and community-level needs. Also, cities like Cape Town and Gaborone have utilised digital platforms to increase public participation in budgeting, specifically targeting the reduction of challenges of poverty, inequality, and unemployment.

Additionally, innovative safety-focused programmes, such as women's safety audits identifying "criminogenic points," including poor lighting in eThekweni⁴³, demonstrate how inclusive urban design is being linked to gender-responsive peacebuilding strategies.

38 Kenya National Report 2025

39 Government of the United Republic of Tanzania. (2025). *Tanzania New Urban Agenda (NUA) Second Implementation Report, 2025*. Page 104.

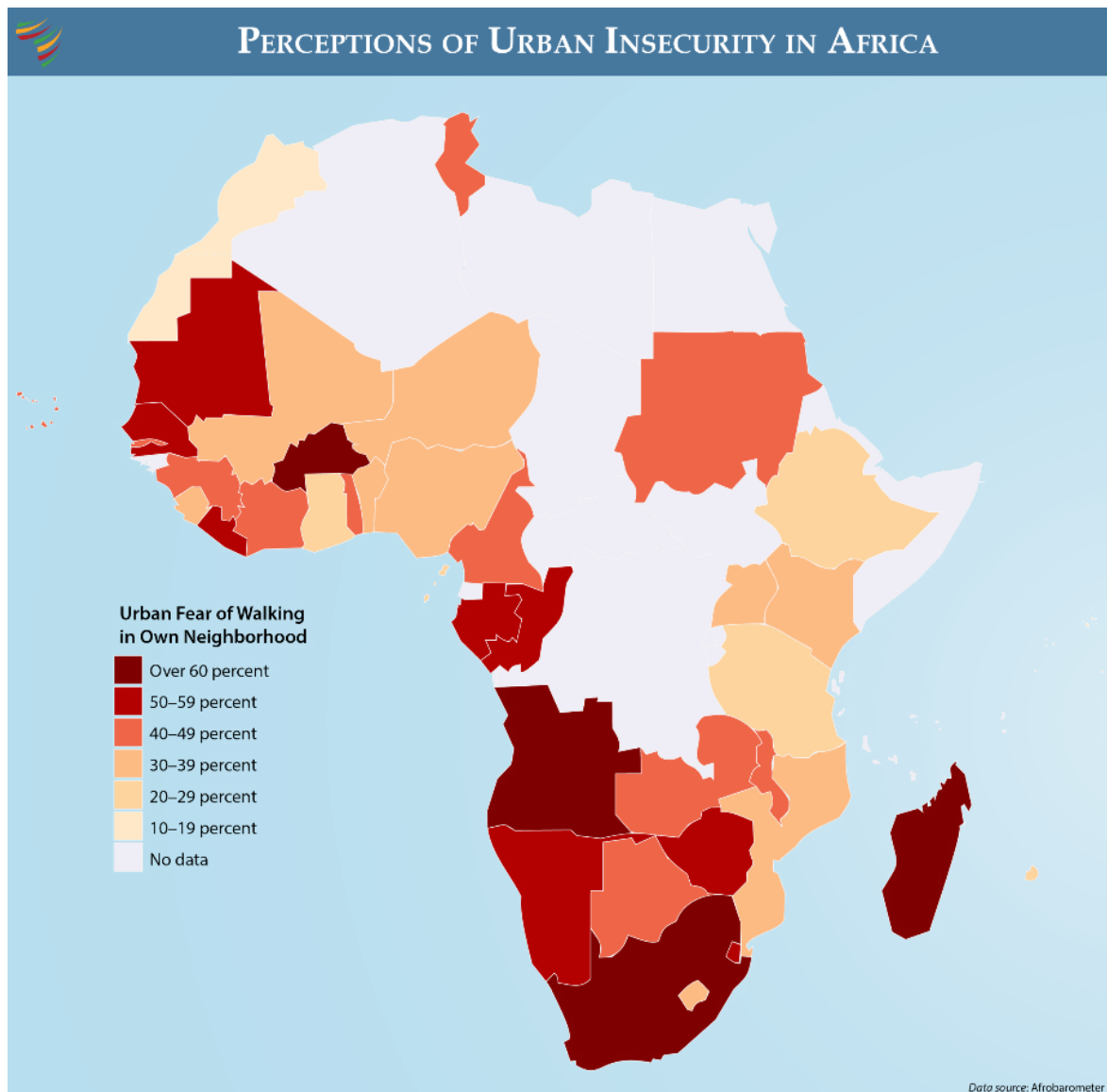
40 Government of Malawi. (2025). *Implementation of the New Urban Agenda: National Update Report-2025*. Page 66.

41 <https://www.kisip.go.ke/second-kenya-informal-settlements-improvement-project-kisip-2>

42 <https://globethics.net/publications/home-grown-solutions-legacy-generations-africa-vol1>

43 Republic of South Africa. (2022). South Africa Country Report: Progress on Implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Department of Human Settlements. Page 15.

Figure 8. Perception of Urban Insecurity in Africa



Source: OECD/SWAC Africapolis database

The depth of institutionalisation and hierarchy in the approach to inclusion varies across the sub-regions. Southern Africa exhibits more structured and formalised participatory governance systems; West Africa combines legislative reforms and dialogue platforms with pressing security challenges; East Africa emphasises decentralisation and innovation-driven engagement; and Central Africa underscores participatory governance as a mechanism for rebuilding trust in fragile contexts.

Respect for the human rights of refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants

Guided by the Harmonized Regional Framework for the NUA, African national governments have increasingly integrated refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and migrants into national and city-level development plans, ensuring and protecting their rights to housing, work, and basic services.

The launch of the Africa Urban Resilience Programme (AURP) in 2024 strengthened the inclusion of displaced populations in urban risk management and social protection systems⁴⁴.

Countries in West Africa have increasingly integrated refugees, IDPs, and migrants into urban policy agendas. As of late 2023, there were over 8.6 million people (including 4.3 million former IDP returnees and 793,524 victims of international trafficking/illegal migration) in West and Central Africa, with Nigeria alone accounting for many of those who self-settled in urban centres⁴⁵. Nigeria has incorporated refugees and IDPs into national development planning and expanded emergency shelter responses⁴⁶.

While Burkina Faso promoted land regularisation and service provision for IDPs to protect their legal identity and the right to adequate shelter⁴⁷, food and urban refuge are the responses and focus for displaced populations in Ghana, collectively signalling a progressive recognition of human rights obligations for displaced groups.

In the Sahel region however, the scale of displacement has placed pressure on already fragile urban systems, as 3.1 million people were internally displaced due to conflict as of March 2023⁴⁸, underscoring the tension between humanitarian need and urban planning capacity.

Despite progress in integration, issues of migration and displacement continue to intersect with urban poverty, social exclusion, and limited

rights to land and services, while city-level policy frameworks often lack comprehensive data and long-term programming to support sustained socio-economic integration of newcomers.

Reports from Somalia emphasise the challenge of “climate-induced urban displacement,” from rural areas to Mogadishu which has led to the creation of massive informal settlements. Regional instability continues to generate cross-border mobility in Burundi, with over 10,000 asylum seekers registered in neighbouring Tanzania in 2023. By November 2025, the numbers increased to 140,000⁴⁹.

Across East Africa, the integration of displaced populations into national urban strategies has been informed by regional frameworks emphasising human rights, participatory governance, and inclusive service delivery. Additionally, the response to the human rights of refugees and IDPs is increasingly tied to climate adaptation and “integrated settlements.” Global frontrunners in granting the right to work and freedom of movement include Uganda and Kenya. Their actions align with NUA Article 28. Uganda hosts over 1.7 million refugees and has committed to the transformation of settlements hosting refugees into sustainable “secondary cities” that benefit both host communities and displaced persons. The Central African subregion presents a more volatile and complex picture of armed conflict, political instability, and protracted displacement.

44 African Union (2024). Africa Urban Resilience Programme launches - “hailed as a remarkable moment in advancing Africa’s Urban Agenda”. <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20240917/africa-urban-resilience-programme-launches-hailed-remarkable-moment-advancing>

45 International Organisation for Migration (2025). A Region on the Move 2022 - 2023: Mobility trends in West and Central Africa (DTM report). Displacement Tracking Matrix. https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1461/files/reports/RDH%20WCA_A%20Region%20on%20the%20Move_2022-2023.pdf?iframe=true

46 Federal Ministry of Works and Housing. (2022). First Report on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Nigeria. Page 112.

47 UN-Habitat. (2024). World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action. Page 179.

48 Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, Global Sustainable Development Report (2023): Times of crisis, times of change: Science for accelerating transformations to sustainable development, (United Nations, New York, 2023). https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/FINAL%20GSDR%202023-Digital%20-110923_1.pdf

49 Concerns raised about ‘coercive’ repatriation of Burundian refugees from Tanzania. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/02/1167028>

The Central African Republic (CAR) and the Democratic Republic of Congo report very high numbers of protracted displacement and political instability, with IDPs often settling in underserved peri-urban areas. However, efforts towards reintegration of IDPs have resulted in 87% of IDPs now hosted by families in urban areas rather than in camps⁵⁰.

The primary challenge is the lack of municipal capacity to uphold human rights in “grey zones” where state presence is weak. However, several Southern African countries have taken steps towards embedding protection for displaced populations and refugees within national policy frameworks. Malawi, for example, hosts over 56,000 refugees and asylum seekers from DR-Congo, Burundi, Somalia, Rwanda and Ethiopia at the Dzaleka Refugee Camp in 2024. The Malawian national government has also developed a National Migration Policy to promote safe and orderly migration⁵¹. Eswatini’s 2025 National Labour Migration Policy prioritises the rights and protection of labour migrants and their contribution to the development of the nation⁵², while South Africa launched the Global Compact for Migration to combat xenophobia and foster social cohesion in urban townships.

Unlike the East and West subregions, where conflict-driven IDPs are the focus, Southern Africa deals more with transnational migrants seeking economic opportunities in cities like Johannesburg and Gaborone.

Southern Africa demonstrates more formal policy frameworks for migration and labour rights, West Africa shows emerging responses to displacement pressures in fragile contexts, East Africa emphasises legal inclusion and service provision for displaced persons, while Central Africa grapples with severe protracted

displacement amid institutional and fiscal limitations.

Coordination and collaboration in the provision of social and basic services for all

Across Africa, the gap in accessing urban basic services continues to widen, especially in fast-growing cities where population growth outpaces planning capacity. Gaps in transportation, water, sanitation, energy, and health services remain significant. Data from across Sub-Saharan Africa indicate that only 18% of urban residents have convenient access to formal public transport. While some metropolitan cities pursue multimodal transport systems, transit-oriented development (TOD) and other mega infrastructure upgrades, there is still heavy reliance on informal transport systems.

The Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system in Lagos, Nigeria accounts for less than 10% of daily travel, with many commuters relying on local public bus and taxi alternatives. Intermediate cities in East Africa, such as Mwanza and Dodoma in Tanzania have similar trends, where residents depend more on informal minibus systems and motorcycle taxis despite heavy investment in mass transit services. The reliance on informal transport modes have significant implications as they compound urban stressors and poor air quality

Only 22% of the urban population in Sub-Saharan Africa has access to piped water. In West African, while Senegal has achieved almost universal access, with 98.7% of urban households connected to improved water sources, in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, about a third of the population (33.99% and 36.97% respectively), lack access to an improved water source, while over half of the population (55.43% to 61.2% respectively) lack

50 IOM Global Crisis Response Platform. <https://crisisresponse.iom.int/response/central-african-republic-crisis-response-plan-2026>

51 Malawi National Report

52 Eswatini National Report

safely managed sanitation⁵³. The situation is more dire in Niger where only 10% of households have private sanitation facilities.

Energy and health infrastructure also show varied progress across the continent. While nearly half the populations of Guinea and Guinea-Bissau do not have access to regular electricity, Ghana in the same West African subregion achieved 94.8% electricity access in 2023. While

Tanzania has 85% of its population living within 5 km of a health facility, child mortality and nutrition deprivations rates are significant in Comoros. In West Africa, 28% of the population in Gambia lacks access to health services, and child mortality and nutrition are severe in Guinea-Bissau. But in contrast, Ghana's National Insurance Scheme grew to 17.84 million subscribers, covering 55.5% of the population in 2023. Some approaches to strengthen infrastructure access include Gambia's National Forum and inter-ministerial committees for facilitating cross-sectoral collaboration in transport, water, and energy planning.

Records from the International Labour Organisation estimate that more than 72 million young people in Africa are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), representing over a quarter of the continent's youth population⁵⁴. About 58% of the population of Mali have undergone no formal level of instruction in 2024.

However, opportunities for both formal and vocational training have increased across the continent.

In Ghana, vocational and technical education expanded significantly in 2024 with 44, 531 people trained.⁵⁵ Kenya has prioritised its Digital Literacy Programme as the primary vehicle for instructional quality. In Malawi⁵⁶ and Lesotho, even though primary school enrolment rates have increased, school completion and enrolment in secondary and tertiary education remains weak, especially among boys⁵⁷.

This period has also seen gradual but uneven expansion of access to internet and fixed broadband connectivity across several African countries. In 2025, Tanzania recorded 263,017 fixed broadband subscriptions, which is equivalent to about 0.4 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants⁵⁸. In Eswatini, approximately 2.7 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants were reported between 2024 and 2025⁵⁹, while Lesotho's subscriptions increased from 0.098 in 2015 to 0.384 in 2023⁶⁰. Malawi successfully extended its National Fiber Backbone Project to all 28 districts by 2024, by deploying over 1,200 km of fiber to cover major cities including Lilongwe, Blantyre, and Mzuzu⁶¹. While internet user subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in Ghana increased from around 50 in 2020 to 68.43 in 2024. This was due in part to policy reforms and government – internet service providers collaboration to reduce data costs and improve accessibility⁶².

53 UNDP (2025). 2025 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/mpireport2025en.pdf>

54 https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/?cat_mode=subject

55 Ghana National Report 2025

56 Republic of Malawi (2025). Implementation of the New Urban Agenda: National Update Report - 2025

57 Lesotho National Report on the New Urban Agenda 2025

58 The United Republic of Tanzania (2025). National Progress Report on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda

59 Kingdom of Eswatini (2026). New Urban Agenda Implementation Report 2026

60 Lesotho National Report on the New Urban Agenda 2025

61 Republic of Malawi (2025). Implementation of the New Urban Agenda: National Update Report - 2025

62 Ghana National Report

Fostering healthy societies

Across Africa, cities face a growing double burden of disease: rising mortality from non-communicable diseases alongside continued exposure to communicable diseases linked to environmental deficits⁶³. In West Africa, the response is characterised by localised infrastructure upgrades, such as the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, which between 2022 and 2024 improved sanitation, clean water, and health clinics across five informal neighbourhoods.

However, the region still faces a critical medical accessibility gap due to the paucity of medical personnel and the brain drain of trained and qualified doctors to other regions of the world, but Cabo Verde stands as a major outlier, boasting a high ratio of 44.2 doctors per 10,000 population⁶⁴ (the average in Africa is approximately 2.2 to 3 doctors per 10,000 people in 2022), while Ghana and Nigeria focus on developing low-carbon, climate-resilient health systems to mitigate rising urban temperatures and air pollution.

Box 3. Ghana National Insurance Scheme

Ghana National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) is a central mechanism for expanding healthcare access and advancing the New Urban Agenda (NUA) principle of “leave no one behind.”

Managed by the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA), the NHIS decoupled healthcare access from immediate cash needs through a coordinated financing structure. Between 2022 and 2024, active subscribers grew from 17.16 million to 18.4 million, over 55% of the population. The scheme targets vulnerable groups: the Free Elderly Healthcare Policy waives premiums for citizens aged 70+, while children aged 6–14 receive prioritised coverage. Benefits include treatment for major childhood cancers and family planning, addressing health inequities in dense urban areas.

In 2025, the government launched the Ghana Medical Trust Fund (MahamaCares) to cover chronic non-communicable diseases previously unsupported by the NHIS, further strengthening urban health resilience. These initiatives contribute to SDG 3 and SDG 11, providing financial risk protection and reducing out-of-pocket expenditures for the urban poor and informal workers.

Despite challenges for expansion, the NHIS represents a structurally significant advance in urban health equity, supporting Ghana's fast-growing cities while promoting inclusive and sustainable urban development.

Source: Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs. (2025). Country progress report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Ghana (2025). Republic of Ghana.

Across East Africa, child health and nutrition remain uneven based on city size, with data from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania revealing disparities from antenatal care to child nutrition rates and other health outcomes in capital cities, smaller urban areas, and rural populations in antenatal

care, skilled delivery and child nutrition⁶⁵. Health reforms in Kenya and Ethiopia focus on developing sustainable health system frameworks to manage the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which previously disrupted NCD services and widened income inequalities across the subregion.

63 United Nations. (2024). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024*. Page 22.

64 Rao, P. (2024, June 20). Mapped: The highest and lowest doctor density around the world. Visual Capitalist. Retrieved from <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/mapped-highest-and-lowest-doctor-density-world>

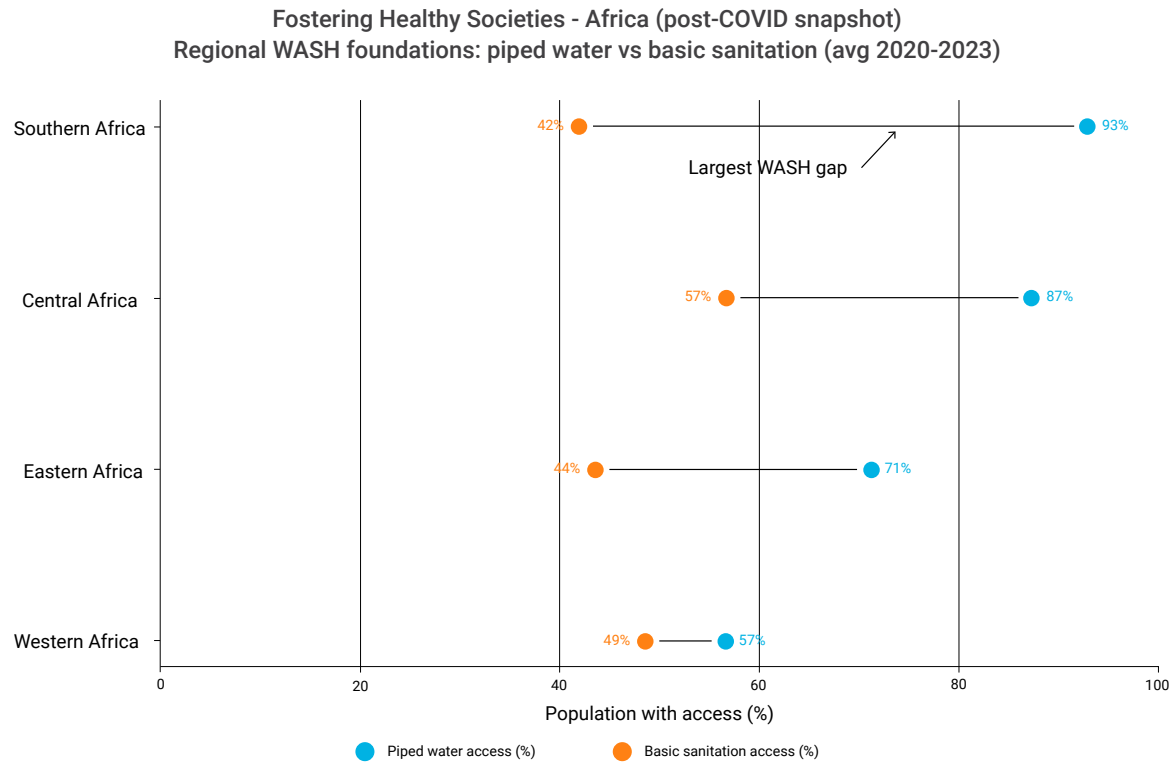
65 UN-Habitat. (2021). Maternal Health Indicators by Locality. [Data Tables]. Pages 2, 4, 5.

Malawi's health reforms focus is on climate-resilient health infrastructure.

Africa also suffers from an acute health personnel crisis due in part to brain drain of locally trained doctors and few medical training centres. In Central Africa, the medical personnel crisis is acute, as evidenced by a ratio of only 0.7 doctors per 10,000 people in the Central African Republic and 1.3 in Cameroon⁶⁶, compared to Southern Africa where Angola and Namibia report doctor-to-population ratios of 2.4 and 5.4. Eswatini doctor to population is quite strong at 15.9.

While the COVID-19 pandemic exposed systemic vulnerabilities, disrupted NCD services, and widened income inequalities⁶⁷, it helped amplify the issues surrounding access to water and sanitation as well as the health risks of vulnerable areas like slums. Therefore, there is renewed action to address inadequate sanitation, open defecation, weak waste management and public health risks in many cities. There has also been an upswing in integrating health services into urban planning through upgrading health-related infrastructure, improving residents' wellbeing and environmental health.

Figure 9. Urban Water and Sanitation Access Gaps Across Sub-Saharan Africa 2020–2023)



Source: Analysis of data from the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) on Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (2023).

66 Rao, P. (2024, June 20). Mapped: The highest and lowest doctor density around the world. Visual Capitalist. Retrieved from <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/mapped-highest-and-lowest-doctor-density-world>

67 United Nations. (2023). The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023. Page 21.

The chart shows that despite improvements in urban service provision across Africa, access to piped water consistently outpaces access to basic sanitation. The gap between these two foundational WASH services remains widest in Southern and Central Africa, underscoring persistent infrastructure and public health vulnerabilities in rapidly urbanising regions.

Promoting national, subnational and local integrated and age- and gender-responsive housing policies and options that support the progressive realisation of the right to adequate housing for all

Housing is a critical challenge across Africa⁶⁸, with the housing deficit set at over 53million units⁶⁹. In addition to over 60% of the urban population who reside in slum-like conditions, affordability is a major issue. About 55% of households across Sub-Saharan Africa spend more than 30% of their income on housing⁷⁰.

In West Africa, the lack of affordable options is particularly severe; in Nigeria, market prices prevent over 55% of the population from getting onto the homeownership ladder⁷¹. There is a shift toward integrated policies in countries such as Senegal's through the "100,000 Housing Units" programme⁷² and Ghana's focus on mortgage accessibility. However, many projects struggle to reach the lowest income populations which experience the highest forms of housing poverty.

In Eastern Africa, housing deficits are acute, evidenced by Uganda's national housing shortage estimated at 2.4 million units, with a 550,000 units shortage in Kampala alone. However, the subregion is pioneering gender-responsive legislation, notably through Kenya's Affordable Housing Act 2024, which mandates the development of 200,000 units annually and has successfully seen 64% of units sold to women⁷³, directly addressing gender disparities in property ownership.

For Southern Africa, informal dwellings remain concentrated in major metropolitan municipalities, including the Cape Town (19.6%), Johannesburg (19.1%), and Ekurhuleni (18.4%)⁷⁴. In response, South Africa has implemented a robust social housing approach within designated restructuring zones, utilising it as a spatial transformation instrument to renovate well-located buildings and develop new mixed-income estates to promote inclusion and redress historical segregation patterns in cities⁷⁵. Also, Lesotho's Maseru2050 plan adopts a "15-minute neighborhood" model to maximise spatial efficiency for families⁷⁶, while Malawi is reviewing its national housing policy to prioritise modular, climate-resilient construction⁷⁷.

While West Africa is primarily focused on market-based affordability and financial barriers, East Africa is leading in gender-integrated legislative frameworks and volume targets, and Southern Africa is using social housing for spatial justice

68 UN-Habitat. (2022). New Urban Agenda implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review in preparation for the second Quadrennial report. Page 19.

69 <https://www.csis.org/analysis/solving-africas-housing-deficit>

70 UN-Habitat. (2019). The Global Housing Affordability Challenge: Urban Data Digest (Version 2). Page 4.

71 Federal Ministry of Works and Housing. (2022). *First Report on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Nigeria*. Page 56.

72 International Finance Corporation (2022). IFC and Senegal's Sovereign Wealth Fund Partner to Develop Affordable Housing in Senegal. <https://www.ifc.org/en/pressroom/2022/ifc-and-senegal-s-sovereign-wealth-fund-partner-to-develop-affor>

73 Kenya National Report

74 Republic of South Africa. (2022). South Africa Country Report: Progress on Implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Department of Human Settlements. Page 41.

75 Republic of South Africa. (2022). South Africa Country Report: Progress on Implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Department of Human Settlements. Page 46.

76 Lesotho National Report

77 Malawi National Report

and urban redesign. All subregions, however, share a common struggle: the “gap market” of citizens who earn too much for housing subsidies but too little to access private credit for housing remains the most under-served demographic across the continent.

Table 10. Estimated Housing Deficits in some African Countries (2022-2026)

Country	Estimated Housing Deficits
Nigeria	17 million–28 million
Burkina Faso	400,000
Ghana	2 million
Benin	200,000
Mali	1.5 million
Togo	500,000
Djibouti	30,000
Uganda	2.4 million
Kenya	2 million
Tanzania	3 million
Rwanda	310,000
Cameroon	2.5 million
Gabon	260,000 – 300,000
Democratic Republic of Congo	3.9 million – 4 million
Republic of Congo	200,000
South Africa	2.2 million
Zambia	1.5 million – 2 million
Angola	2.2 million

Source: Centre for Affordable Housing 2024 Yearbook⁵⁸; World Bank (2024)⁶² Africa Confidential, 2025⁵⁹; Ecofin Agency (2026)⁶⁰; Kriek, R (2025)⁶¹

2.2. Sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all

Sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth

African cities are economic engines, contributing significantly to the continent’s GDP, yet they struggle to convert rapid urbanisation into productive employment, particularly for the youth.

In East Africa, the concentration of wealth in urban areas is dominant. In Kenya for example, five cities - Eldoret, Kisumu, Mombasa, Nairobi, and Nakuru, generate 70% of the national GDP⁷⁸. However, this urban economic contribution coexists with a heavy burden of informality, as roughly nine in ten urban workers are employed in the informal economy⁷⁹, accounting for 80% to 83% of workers in Nigeria⁸⁰ and Kenya⁸¹ respectively. Hence there is a heavy burden of the working poor across many cities.

78 United Nations. (2017). *Habitat III regional report: Africa: Transformational housing and sustainable urban development in Africa*. Page 23.

79 United Nations. (2024). The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024. Page 30.

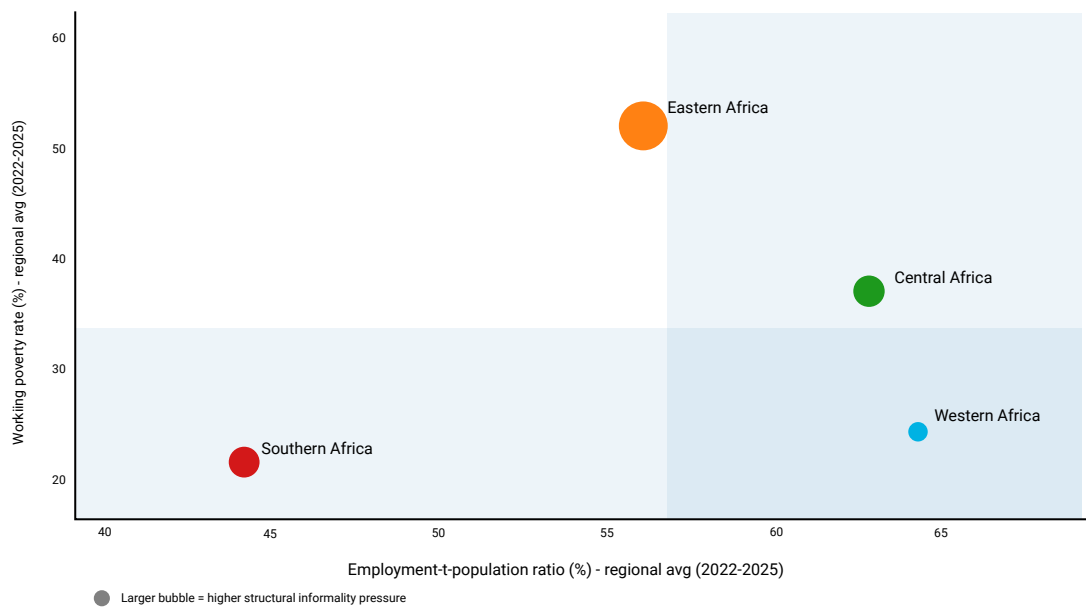
80 Federal Ministry of Works and Housing. (2022). First Report on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Nigeria. Page 80.

81 Government of Kenya. (2025). Kenya National Progress Report on the New Urban Agenda (NUA). Page 15.

Examples include Togo and Rwanda where the urban working poverty rates for 2025 were 20.3%⁸² and 42.3%⁸³ respectively. While higher employment-to-population ratios may suggest stronger labour absorption, they do not necessarily translate into reduced poverty.

Eastern and Central Africa reflect higher structural informality pressures, highlighting the persistence of vulnerable employment and limited productivity gains despite high participation rates in the labour market.

Figure 11. Regional Inclusive Growth Landscape in Africa (2022–2025): Employment-to-Population Ratios, Working Poverty and Informality Pressures



Source: Analysis of data from the International Labour Organization (ILOSTAT) datasets on employment-to-population ratios, working poverty rates, and informal employment rates, 2022–2025

In West Africa, Ghana reports that Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) contribute approximately 70% its overall GDP⁸⁴, though the subregion is actively testing more structured spatial interventions. Senegal, for instance, has pioneered the use of “territorial poles” as strategic instruments for structural economic transformation, aiming to correct regional imbalances and redistribute economic activity beyond the Dakar metropolitan area⁸⁵.

Cities often bear high social costs including the dominant urban youth bulge, which places intense pressure on urban labour markets. Approximately, 23% of African youth are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). Nearly 61% are women, underscoring gendered dimension of the significant demographic pressures on labour markets and inclusive growth pathways. There is a focus on formalizing urban productivity through integrated planning and national policy architectures with the Vision 2063 of Malawi

84 Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development. (2025). Tanzania New Urban Agenda (NUA) Second Implementation Report, 2025. Page 27.
 85 Senegal National Report

82 International Labour Organization. (2025). Working Poverty Rates – Africa – 2025.
 83 International Labour Organization. (2025). *Working Poverty Rates – Africa – 2025*.

which identified urbanisation as a key pillar for industrialization and moving to a middle-income status. There has also been growth in the creative sector, especially in Southern Africa. Malawi has also shifted towards a robust legislative framework with the National Arts and Heritage Bill (2024), which established a National Arts and Heritage Council (NAHEC) and a dedicated promotion fund which led to an estimated 4.2% growth in the sector in 2024. Also in Southern Africa, Eswatini's creative industry contributes about 0.2% to the national economy but the development of the Eswatini National Arts and Culture Policy (2023 - 2028) is envisaged to develop the sector further.

Tanzania reports that 45% of its GDP is derived from informal sector activities and MSMEs, necessitating policies that bridge the gap between informal resilience and formal growth. Also, the arts and entertainment sector grew by 17.7% in 2023, making it the nation's fastest-growing industry, with increased support of government funding, formalisation of artists, and the integration of cultural zones in cities such as Dar es Salaam and Mwanza, providing support for over 75,000 jobs. Kenya focus on cultural infrastructure and urban integration through establishing cultural centres and markets such as the Utamaduni and Maasai markets to provide exhibition and performance spaces while promoting culture within urban planning frameworks.

Support for local economic development

Africa recognises empowered cities as economic engines through the Harmonized Regional

Framework, prioritising decentralized financing and digital local revenue systems⁸⁶ to reduce dependence on central government transfers.

In East Africa, this transition is exemplified by Kisumu, Kenya, which in 2023 revitalised its lake-front and digitised revenue collection, boosting "Own Source Revenue" to fund local infrastructure and MSME clusters independently. Tanzania activated dedicated Local Economic Development (LED) units in Tanga and Shinyanga councils to promote cluster development that links urban hubs to rural agriculture⁸⁷.

West Africa shows a similar trend towards institutionalizing local economic development, with Ghana implementing a new National Local Economic Development (LED) policy (2024-2029) to foster inclusive urban economies⁸⁸ and adding value to local resources for export.

In Southern Africa, LED trainings and programmes are easily accessible within neighbourhood hubs in Lesotho, targeting women and families⁸⁹, to ensure that economic participation is gender-responsive and household-centred. There is also a shift towards integrated multi-level coordination, most notably through South Africa's District Development Model (DDM), which was adopted to coordinate inclusive "one district plans" that align national, provincial, and local budgets into a single spatial logic⁹⁰.

Comparing the regional perspectives, East Africa is leading in the digital modernisation of municipal finance to drive autonomy, West Africa is focusing on long-term policy frameworks to formalize the MSME-driven economy, and Southern Africa is

86 United Nations. (2017). Habitat III regional report: Africa: Transformational housing and sustainable urban development in Africa. Page 18.

87 Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development. (2025). Tanzania New Urban Agenda (NUA) Second Implementation Report, 2025. Page 116.

88 Ministry of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development. (2025). *Ghana National Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Page 4.

89 Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police. (2026). *The Lesotho National Report on the New Urban Agenda*. Page 13.

90 Republic of South Africa. (2022). *South Africa Country Report: Progress on Implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Department of Human Settlements. Page 12.

championing integrated multi-level governance models like the DDM to fix service delivery gaps. Across all subregions, the clear trend is a move away from top-down national directives toward “bottom-up” territorial strategies that leverage the unique competitive advantages of individual cities and districts.

Increasing economic productivity and labour force efficiency

Africa is boosting economic productivity by leveraging the digital economy and investing in critical urban infrastructure. Lagos, Nigeria expanded its integrated transport system, including the Blue and Red Line rail projects, which has resulted in reduced commuting time for many workers.

It has also unlocked new commercial corridors in the city. In Ghana, GDP per employed person grew by 8.77% in 2024, and MSMEs contributed approximately 70% to GDP, particularly in agriculture, manufacturing, and services. In East Africa, the productivity narrative is dominated by rural-to-urban employment transition, which in Tanzania alone accounts for 20% to 50% of all productivity growth⁹¹. To ensure labour force is equipped with relevant skills, Uganda has established 19 zonal industrial skill hubs to equip youth with practical trades and entrepreneurial skills⁹².

Similarly, Malawi’s Vision 2063 prioritises vocational technical education and skill training to cultivate a productive middle-income society capable of sustaining industrial growth. While West Africa is prioritising massive infrastructure and digital integration to solve urban “clogging,” East Africa is leading in capturing the “urbanisation dividend” through labour migration and decentralised industrial upskilling, and Southern

Africa is focusing on policy-driven human capital development to align labor force efficiency with national industrialisation goals. While challenges like the youth bulge and high informality persist, the continent’s trajectory indicates a move toward more organised, skill-intensive, and infrastructure-backed urban economies. Given the global Artificial intelligence turn, there is need to explore ways in which this can further catalyse local economic development and plug young Africans into the global knowledge economy.

Support for informal economy workers

COVID-19 pandemic was a period of intense vulnerability for informal workers. In South Africa, 1.5 million informal workers lost their livelihoods—almost double the losses in the formal sector, with disproportionate impacts on women. These trends highlight the urgency of extending support, social protection, financial inclusion, and targeted recovery measures. In response, cities like Soweto and Khayelitsha are leveraging technology by utilising blockchain-based payment and inventory systems to formalise transactions and improve business management.

Similarly, Zimbabwe is integrating “factory shells” and dedicated working spaces directly into new residential settlement designs to minimize the distance between livelihoods and housing⁹³, while the Municipality of Victoria Falls has established SME incubators specifically to support informal enterprises within tourism-linked markets.

Between 2022 and 2025, Lagos, Nigeria, under its State Inclusive Infrastructure Initiative, provided market stalls for thousands of street vendors. By issuing digital ID cards and securing designated workplaces, the government has begun integrating these micro-entrepreneurs into social protection schemes and municipal planning, effectively

91 United Nations. (2017). *Habitat III regional report: Africa: Transformational housing and sustainable urban development in Africa*. Page 23.

92 Uganda National Report

93 *Republic of Zimbabwe, National Report for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Page 25.

reducing harassment and boosting local revenue. Kenya's Affordable Housing Programme allocated over 11 billion Kenyan shillings specifically for Jua Kali artisans and MSMEs to supply essential construction materials like doors and windows, providing a guaranteed market that de-risks their businesses and enables them to access formal credit.

Sustainable & inclusive urban prosperity

African cities have made significant progress towards fostering sustainable and inclusive prosperity, although to varying degrees. Several countries are leveraging fiscal innovation, digital transformation, and targeted local economic development to enhance productivity, generate employment, and formalise informal livelihoods. In Togo, The Réussite diaspora programme mobilises Togolese in diaspora to attract foreign direct investment (FDIs). Pilot programs have been implemented in large cities.

Despite a low urban working poverty rate of 2.9% in 2025 in Gabon⁹⁴, labour market participation is limited, particularly for women, and only 9% of firms have access to credit. Rwanda has achieved sustained urban economic growth averaging 8% annually, reducing urban poverty and creating over 115,000 non-farm jobs in Kigali through initiatives such as Agakiro and Hanga Umuriro⁹⁵, strengthening the financial ecosystem for MSMEs⁹⁶.

Mauritius represents a high-performing model of urban prosperity, supported by structural diversification, digital transformation, and advanced financial ecosystems.

Over 97% of firms maintain formal banking accounts, and 60.8% have access to credit, enabling MSMEs growth. Targeted labour market interventions, such as the Back-to-Work Programme, have reduced female unemployment and driven an urban working poverty rate down to 0.1%⁹⁷.

2.3. Environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development

2.3.1. Environmental hazards, mitigation and adaptation efforts

The African continent is not immune to the global climate crisis. From flooding to droughts, urban heat islands to desertification, Africa continues to grapple with climate emergencies that have a significant urban impact. The continent experienced a series of extreme weather events, including droughts, floods, cyclones, landslides, cold waves and heatwaves. These recent events alone account for 54 per cent of the over 412 million people impacted by such disasters across Africa since 2011. The NUA recognises that sustainable urbanisation cannot be achieved without efficient environmental management. Across the continent, the shift from global warming to what the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres termed the era of “*global boiling*”⁹⁸ changed the disaster risk profiles of cities. This section explores environmental hazards, the systemic risks that they pose to African GDP, and the innovative adaptation and mitigation strategies currently being deployed.

94 International Labour Organization. (2025). *Working Poverty Rates – Africa – 2025*.

95 United Nations. (2017). *Habitat III regional report: Africa: Transformational housing and sustainable urban development in Africa*. Page 26.

96 International Labour Organization. (2025). *Working Poverty Rates – Africa – 2025*.

97 UN-Habitat. (2022). *New Urban Agenda implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review in preparation for the second Quadrennial report*. Page 27.

98 United Nations (2023). Hottest July ever signals ‘era of global boiling has arrived’ says UN chief. United Nations. July 28, 2023. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/07/1139162>

Flooding

Flooding is the most pervasive environmental hazard facing African cities, driven by a combination of urban sprawl, fragile topographies, inadequate drainage, and intensifying rainfall patterns^{99,100}. Between 2022 and 2025, African countries experienced record levels of flooding¹⁰¹.

In 2022, countries like Nigeria, Cameroon, and Niger faced rainfall 20% above average, with Chad recording its heaviest rainfall in 30 years. By 2024, flooding affected 7.5 million people across 18 countries, with Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) among the hardest hit. Early 2025 reports indicate intensified flood risks, with over 129,000 people affected in countries including DRC, Nigeria, Ghana, and the Central African Republic¹⁰².

In West Africa, flood magnitudes and frequency have increased, with projections indicating up to 45% higher flood events for 2-year and 20-year return periods in the near-term future. Countries like Mali, Senegal, and Sierra Leone experienced prolonged rainy seasons extending beyond the typical June - September periods¹⁰³.

In Central Africa, flooding has disrupted livelihoods, destroyed thousands of homes, and submerged farmland, particularly in Nigeria, DRC, and Cameroon¹⁰⁴. In East and Southern Africa, while droughts dominated in some regions, heavy rainfall events caused localised flooding, especially in river basins and low-lying areas¹⁰⁵.

Sea-level rise

Sea-level rise in Africa is projected to continue at an accelerated rate, with significant impacts expected by 2025¹⁰⁶. Sea-level rise accelerated since the early 1990s, with the rate between 2012 and 2023 more than four times higher than the rate between 1993 and 2003.

The continent is experiencing a rise of four times faster since 2010, with about 80% of this increase attributed to added water mass from polar melt¹⁰⁷. Coastal cities face an even more existential threat as a result, and water-related disasters have become more volatile. This trend highlights the need for urgent action to address climate-related risks and develop more resilient mitigation and adaptation strategies.

99 The Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2024). Record Levels of Flooding in Africa Compounds Stress on Fragile Countries. The Africa Center for Strategic Studies. December 10, 2024. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/record-levels-of-flooding-in-africa-compounds-stress-on-fragile-countries/>

100 All Africa (2025). Africa: Floods in Sub-Saharan Africa - Causes, Determinants and Health! July 29, 2025. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202507290495.html>

101 The Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2024). Record Levels of Flooding in Africa Compounds Stress on Fragile Countries. The Africa Center for Strategic Studies. December 10, 2024. <https://africacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Flooding-in-Africa.pdf>

102 OCHA (2025). West and Central Africa 2025 Monitoring of the flooding situation. OCHA. July 22, 2025. https://reliefweb.int/attachments/356ab3e4-177c-48a1-917b-6bbf19492de6/WCA%202025%20Flooding%20Snapshot_July01%20vf.pdf

103 Diop, S. B., Ekolu, J., Trambly, Y., Dieppo, B., Grimaldi, S., Bodian, A., Blanchet, J., Rameshwaran, P., Salamon, P., and Sultan, B.: Climate change impacts on floods in West Africa: new insight from two large-scale hydrological models, *Nat. Hazards Earth Syst. Sci.*, 25, 3161–3184, <https://doi.org/10.5194/nhess-25-3161-2025>, 2025.

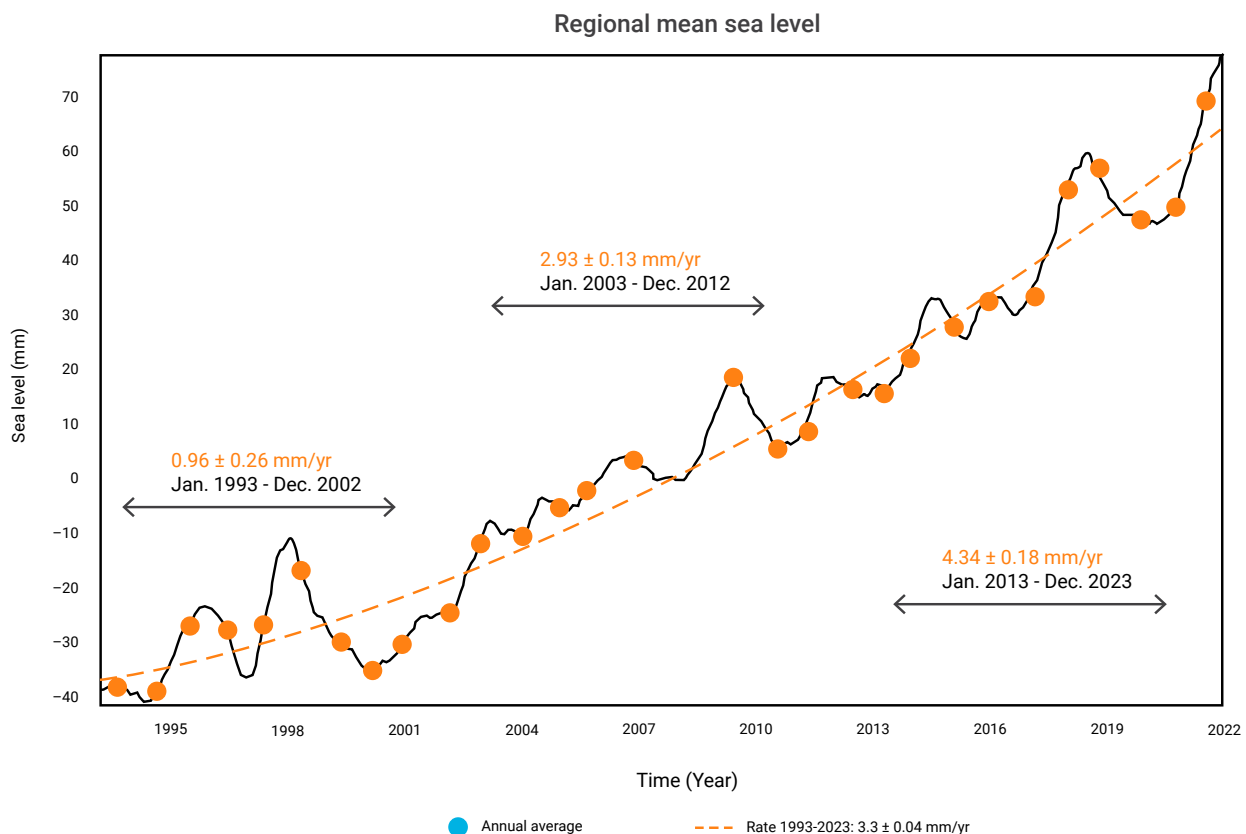
104 OCHA (2025). West and Central Africa 2025 Monitoring of the flooding situation. OCHA. July 22, 2025. https://reliefweb.int/attachments/356ab3e4-177c-48a1-917b-6bbf19492de6/WCA%202025%20Flooding%20Snapshot_July01%20vf.pdf

105 Ibid.

106 Ghomsi, F. E., Stroeve, J., Bonaduce, A., & Raj, R. P. (2025). Accelerating sea level rise in Africa and its large marine ecosystems since the 1990s. *Communications Earth & Environment*, 6(1). doi:10.1038/s43247-025-02965-z

107 Ghomsi, F. E., Stroeve, J., Crawford, A., Tamoffo, A. T., Mouassom, F. L., & Raogosa, M. (2026). 2023-2024 El Nino amplifies record sea level surges in African marine domains. *Communications Earth & Environment*. doi:10.1038/s43247-026-03204-9

Figure 12. Regional Sea Level Rise across Africa (1999 - 2023)



Source: Ghomsi et al. (2025).

Over the past five years, across the continent, many disaster response programmes have focused on flood-risk and sea-level management. West African countries are performing strongly in legislative reform and urban renewal. In June 2025, Nigeria approved a revised National Urban Development Policy (NUDP)¹⁰⁸ mandating nature-based solutions for all new urban expansions. Lagos has implemented stricter construction regulations with new building codes requiring building foundations to be 1–1.5 metres above ground level so as to be climate resilient¹⁰⁹. In 2023, Senegal implemented the Good Ecological

Governance Programme in the intermunicipal agreement of Senegal's Petite Côte for integrated coastal zone management (EIPC-ICZM). The EIPC-ICZM programme¹¹⁰ aims to support five municipalities on Senegal's Petite Côte (Mbour, Saly, Ngaparou, Somone, Malicounda) in their ecological, energy and economic transition by providing them with a portfolio of intermunicipal projects contributing to inclusive management of natural resources. It promotes effective environmental governance by fostering a strong sense of citizenship.

108 Federal Government of Nigeria (2025). Revised National Urban Development Policy. June 3, 2025. https://www.fmhud.gov.ng/themes/front_end_themes_01/images/download/25060893318.pdf

109 Richards, O. (2026). Bridging unapproved construction with regulatory compliance in Lagos. The Guardian. February 28, 2026. <https://guardian.ng/saturday-magazine/c105-saturday-magazine/bridging-unapproved-construction-with-regulatory-compliance-in-lagos/#:~:text=E2%80%9CThe%20Ministry%20of%20Physical%20Planning,put%20at%201%2D1.5metres.>

110 Op. cit., Climate Chance (2023). Programme de Bonne Gouvernance Ecologique dans l'Entente Intercommunale de la Petite Côte pour une Gestion Intégrée des Zones Côtières réussie (EIPC – GIZC).

Southern Africa is the continental top performer in climate finance mobilisation and institutional “Build Back Better” frameworks. For example, South Africa’s District Development Model (DDM)¹¹¹ and its February 2026 National State of Disaster declaration¹¹² show a highly responsive, albeit reactive, institutional machine. Eswatini has pioneered the use of Green Climate Fund resources to mandate that 20% of urban land be zoned for green open spaces¹¹³. However, Southern Africa faces a unique transboundary challenge. The reports highlight that South Africa’s necessary dam releases during La Niña events exacerbated flooding in downstream Mozambique, indicating a performance gap in regional hydraulic coordination¹¹⁴.

East Africa leads in blending engineering (grey) with nature-based (green) infrastructure.

For instance, Tanzania’s Msimbazi Basin Development Project is a global gold standard, transforming 60 hectares of flood-prone land into a “Strategic Green Park” that doubles as a flood retention basin¹¹⁵. In Kenya, the Second Kenya Informal Settlements Improvement Project (KISIP2) has successfully upgraded drainage for 1.2 million residents in informal settlements.

Also, the Stormwater Drainage and Flood Mitigation under the Kenya Urban Support Programme (KUSP) has improved stormwater drainage infrastructure in Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru, and Eldoret, with 244 km of storm drains constructed to mitigate urban flooding¹¹⁶. Noteworthy, East Africa’s performance is highly focused on agro-resilience. The reports from Rwanda and Kenya show a shift toward “water pans” and retention ponds that capture flood runoff for irrigation, turning a threat into an agricultural asset¹¹⁷.

111 South Africa National Report on New Urban Agenda 2022. December 2022. New Urban Agenda Platform. December 21, 2022. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/node/2453>

112 Republic of South Africa (2026). Statement on the Cabinet Meeting of 25 February 2026. South African Government. February 26, 2026. <https://www.gov.za/news/cabinet-statements/statement-cabinet-meeting-25-february-2026-26-feb-2026>

113 Global Water Partnership for Southern Africa (2024). Eswatini Green Climate Fund Readiness Project. Global Water Partnership for Southern Africa. September 2024. <https://www.gwp.org/en/GWP-SouthernAfrica/WE-ACT/Programmes/climate-resilience/eswatini-green-climate-fund-readiness-project/>

114 Prevention Web (2026). La Niña, Climate change, high exposure and vulnerability combined led to devastating floods in parts of Southern Africa. Prevention Web. January 30, 2026. <https://www.preventionweb.net/news/la-nina-climate-change-high-exposure-and-vulnerability-combined-led-devastating-floods-parts#:~:text=Mozambique's%20downstream%20location%20within%20major,prolonged%20flooding%20in%20downstream%20areas.>

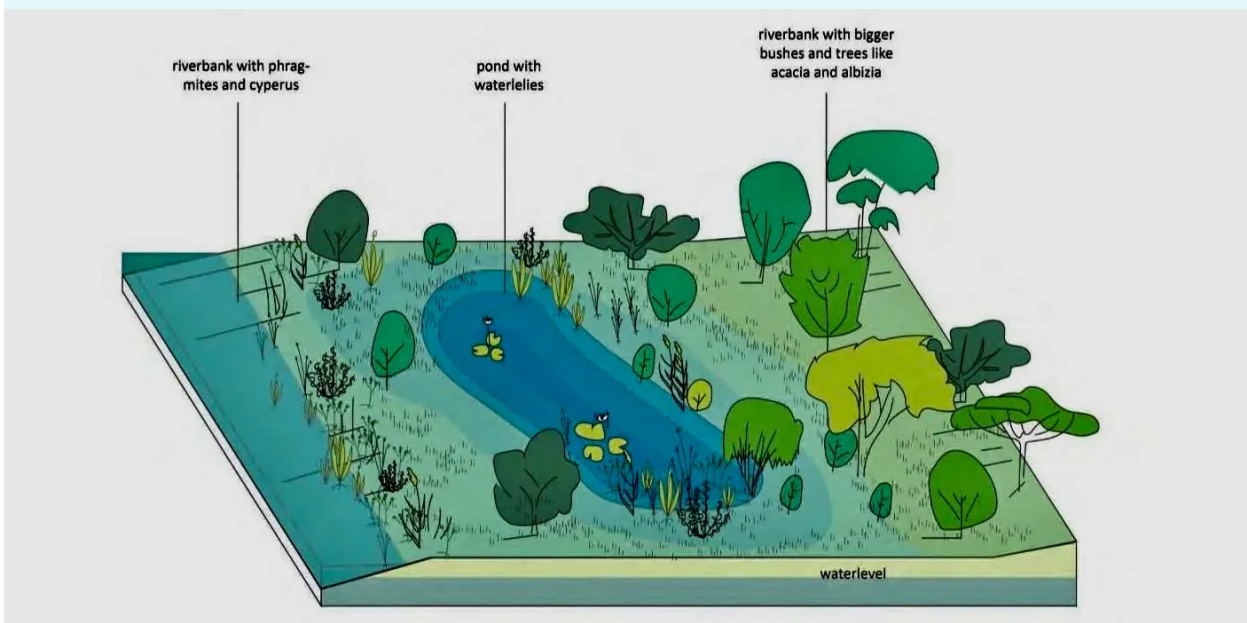
115 World Bank (2026). Strengthening Flood Resilience in Rapidly Growing Cities. World Bank. January 27, 2026. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2026/01/26/strengthening-flood-resilience-in-rapidly-growing-cities#:~:text=In%20Tanzania%2C%20through%20the%20Msimbazi,new%20investments%20in%20an%20economically>

116 Republic of Kenya (2025). Kenya National Progress Report on the New Urban Agenda 2022-2026. August 30, 2025. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Kenya-National-Report-2025-1.pdf>

117 The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2025). FAO wraps up Regional Program strengthening flood management and resilience in Eastern Africa. FAO. August 1, 2025. <https://www.fao.org/africa/news-stories/news-detail/fao-wraps-up-regional-program-strengthening-flood-management-and-resilience-in-eastern-africa/en>

Box 4: Case Study: Msimbazi Basin Development Project

The Msimbazi Basin Development Project is an initiative aimed at enhancing flood resilience and integrating urban development in the Msimbazi River Basin of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The project is part of a broader effort to address the environmental degradation and vulnerability of Dar es Salaam to natural hazards and climate change impacts. It is supported by funding from the World Bank Group's International Development Association (IDA) and additional funding from the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs through Invest International. The project focuses on transforming flood-prone areas into safe, habitable zones with urban development potential. It includes the creation of a city park area as a buffer zone and the establishment of a new residential area. The project also encompasses dredging and construction of river embankments to prevent flooding and aims to improve living conditions in the area.



The Msimbazi Basin Development Project is a testament to the collaborative efforts of international organizations and the government of Tanzania to create a sustainable and resilient environment for its people.

Source: <https://www.msimbazibasin.tz/project-overview/>

Urban heat

Another climate impact is urban heat. Urban heat stress kills, on average, more than twice as many people annually as hurricanes and tornadoes combined¹¹⁸. By 2040, more than 2 billion urban dwellers could be exposed to temperature increases of at least 0.5°C above current levels¹¹⁹.

In Africa, this heat intensity and effects mimicking the lines of socio-economic disparity. For example, the urban heat island effect in low-income townships in Johannesburg such as Alexandra, Katlehong, Soweto, and Tembisa, is immense with temperatures reaching up to 6.5°C higher

118 World Health Organization (2024). Heat and Health. World Health Organization. May 28, 2024. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-heat-and-health>

119 United Nations. (2025). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025*. Page 45.

than more affluent neighbourhoods¹²⁰. In Ghana, temperatures in Accra are rising faster than in surrounding peri-urban and rural areas, with an average urban-rural temperature differential of 3-5°C¹²¹.

In response to the heat island effect, many cities are transitioning from general climate adaptation to specific urban heat risk management. In Ghana, the 2025 National Roadmap to Decarbonise the Building and Construction Sector includes passive cooling standards to reduce energy demand for air conditioning in new affordable housing units¹²². In Freetown, Sierra Leone the “FreetownTheTreeTown”¹²³ is an unconventional tree-growing campaign. By uploading photos to the TreeTracker app, Freetown residents can document tree planting activities and receive mobile micropayments for their efforts. The model has been a massive success thus far as since 2021, Freetown residents successfully planted and tracked 250,000 trees and through partnerships with 10 commercial tree nurseries and 10 community-based organizations, the initiative created more than 550 short-term jobs. Currently, the city is on track to plant 7 million trees by 2030 while achieving an 80% tree survival rate.

In South Africa, the *District Development Model (DDM)* is helping to synchronise municipal cooling strategies. The Government highlights the “cool roofs” pilot programs in post-disaster housing reconstruction¹²⁴.

Similarly, through the Green Cities Project, the Eswatini government has achieved a legislative milestone by proposing to zone 20% of urban land for green open spaces to mitigate rising temperature¹²⁵.

The Kenyan Government promoted the integration of *Early Warning Systems (EWS)* for heatwaves into municipal emergency protocols. In Ethiopia, the Green Legacy Initiative¹²⁶ was launched, with the transformation of Sheger Park, which has significantly reduced localized ambient temperatures by up to 3°C through the restoration of riverine ecosystems that serve as cooling lungs for Addis Ababa.

Other milestones include planting 32.5+ billion trees since 2019, raising forest cover from 17.2% to 23.6%; restoration of millions of hectares of degraded land, particularly in Gurage and Wolaita zones; engaging over 20 million citizens in nationwide campaigns; creation of over 767,000 jobs, mainly for youth and women; and achieving world record for largest single-day tree planting with over 700 million seedlings.

In summary, while West Africa has focused on the individual building scale (insulation and passive design) to protect its massive population, Southern Africa prioritises macro-zoning (land-use laws). In contrast, East Africa stands out for its ecological engineering, using entire river basins and park systems to regulate city-wide microclimates.

120 UN-Habitat. (2024). *World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action*. Page 102.

121 *Ghana National Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Page 22.

122 Ministry of Local Government Chieftancy and Religious Affairs (2025). Ghana Reaffirms Commitment to Sustainable Urban Development at UN-Habitat Assembly in Nairobi. June 6, 2025. <http://www.mlgrd.gov.gh/index.php/media2/news/323-ghana-reaffirms-commitment-to-sustainable-urban-development-at-un-habitat-assembly-in-nairobi>

123 Making Cities Resilient 2030 (2025). Urban Heat Risk Management Resource Package (Consultative Version). <https://mcr2030.undrr.org/publication/urban-heatrisk-management-resource-package>

124 Republic of South Africa (2026). Statement on the Cabinet Meeting of 25 February 2026. February 26, 2026. <https://www.gov.za/news/cabinet-statements/statement-cabinet-meeting-25-february-2026-26-feb-2026>

125 World Bank (2025). Handbook for Urban Heat Management in the Global South. World Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/43654> License: CC BY-NC 3.0 IGO.”

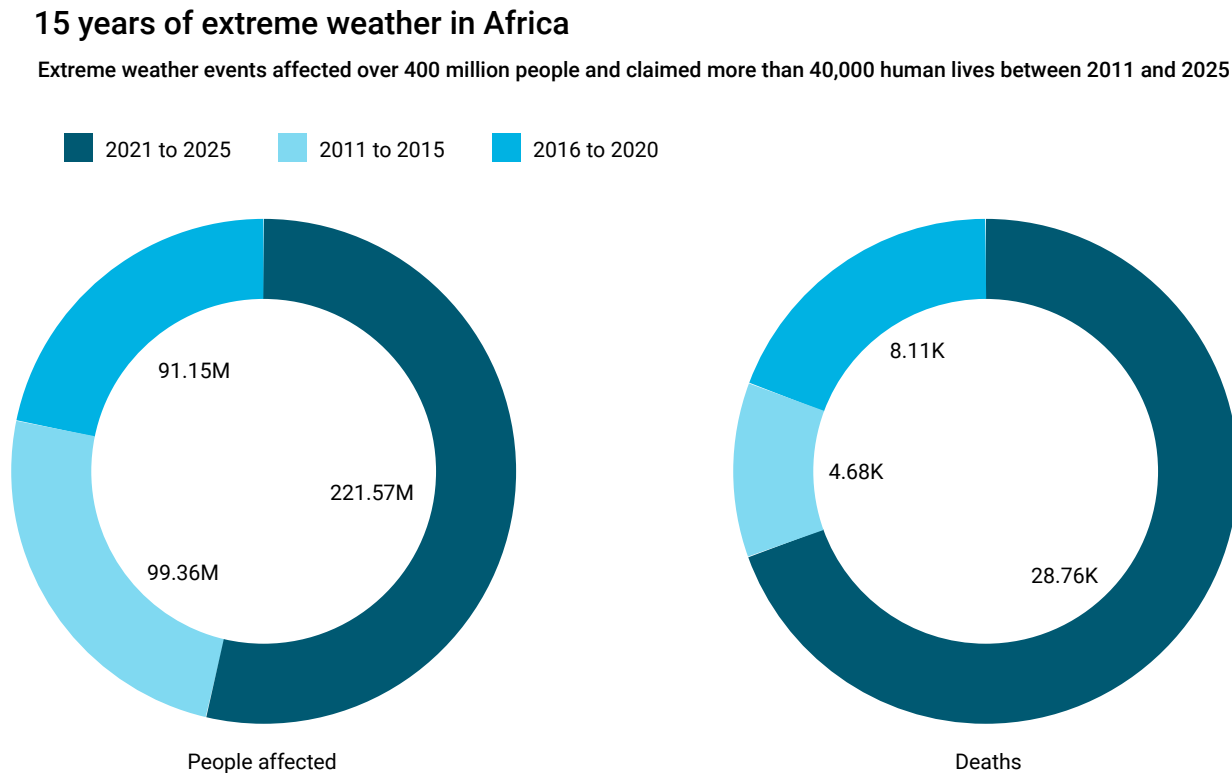
126 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (No date). Green Legacy Initiative. <https://greenlegacy.et/green-legacy/home>

Climate risks

Over the last five years, the climate risk profile of Africa has evolved¹²⁷ with cities experiencing a polycrisis of transboundary shocks, demographic pressures, and conflict. Data from the Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT)¹²⁸, reveals that at least

221.57 million people were affected during this five-year period, more than the combined totals from the previous decade. Disaster-related deaths rose to 28,759, over three times the number recorded between 2016 and 2020.

Figure 13. People affected by Extreme weather events in Africa (2011 - 2025)



Source: EM-DAT International Disaster Database. Created by Pandey¹²⁹

The continent contributes less than 4% of global emissions but bears a disproportionate burden of climate impacts. Many African nations are investing up to 2% of their GDP on adaptation efforts, yet access to climate finance remains a major barrier.

For example, Tanzania’s National Climate Change Strategy (NCCS) estimates that climate change costs the nation between 1–2 per cent of its GDP annually¹³⁰.

127 The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2025). Climate Change and Health: Strategic Framework 2025. July 2025. <https://africacdc.org/download/climate-change-and-health-strategic-framework-2025/#>

128 Pandey, K. (2025). Africa’s climate crisis: 2021-2025 marks the deadliest period in 15 years. Down to Earth. July 10, 2025. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/climate-change/africas-climate-crisis-2021-2025-marks-the-deadliest-period-in-15-years>

129 Pandey, K. (2025). Africa’s climate crisis: 2021-2025 marks the deadliest period in 15 years. Down to Earth. July 10, 2025. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/climate-change/africas-climate-crisis-2021-2025-marks-the-deadliest-period-in-15-years>

130 *Tanzania New Urban Agenda (NUA) Second Implementation Report, 2025*. Page 74.

Climate change is a key contributor to conflicts across Africa. Climate-induced conflicts are heavily concentrated in the Sahel and East Africa, where droughts and floods trigger violent competition for water and grazing land¹³¹. Without robust urban intervention, Africa risks exacerbated food insecurity, expansion of the number of fragile states, and widespread displacement. Key hotspots include the Lake Chad Basin, Somalia, South Sudan, and the Sudan-Sahel belt, where climate shocks fuel nomadic-herder violence and displacement. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns of a 200 per cent increase in human displacement across Africa if global warming reaches 1.6°C, rising to 600 per cent increase at 2.6°C¹³². High vulnerability to flooding in Central African Republic further compounds existing instability¹³³.

Climate mitigation and adaptation measures are multiscalar. They include nature-based solutions such as the “Sponge City” concept - reducing paved surfaces and integrating pervious areas into neighbourhood design¹³⁴ – which is gaining traction. An example is Durban, South Africa, where the Metropolitan Open Space System (D-MOSS) covers 33 per cent of the municipal land area¹³⁵. This network of green spaces is central to the city’s resilience, providing natural drainage and cooling.

National governments are scaling institutional responses. In Kenya, the government launched the Building Climate Resilience with the Urban Poor (BCRUP) Strategy at the 2023 Africa Climate

Summit in Nairobi¹³⁶. This initiative specifically targets the most vulnerable urban residents who lack the resources to adapt to environmental shocks. The Tanzanian government launched the National Emergency Operations and Communication Centre (EOCC) in Dodoma. Operated under the African Union’s Multi-Hazard Early Warning and Early Action System (AMHEWAS) initiative¹³⁷, this centre represents a critical step towards the “early warning for all” mandate, ensuring that urban populations receive timely information before disaster strikes.

Climate mitigation efforts are also linked to urban energy security on the continent. South Africa’s Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement (REIPPP) programme has successfully lowered the cost of solar power to as little as \$0.05/kilowatt-hour¹³⁸. Similarly, as the energy sector accounts for 50.5% of emissions, Lesotho is prioritising renewable energy (expanding solar and hydropower to decarbonize the grid), digitisation (adopting a smart-city approach using GIS and climate modeling to optimize energy use and resilience mapping), and green architecture (implementing building regulations that emphasize passive cooling and heating to reduce the urban heat island effect). By decoupling urban growth from carbon-intensive energy, African cities are creating more sustainable and affordable municipal energy markets while being climate smart.

Sub-regionally, there is a clear shift from general policy formulation toward integrated urban

131 Aina, F. (2026). Fighting climate change in the Sahel is worsening conflicts - new research shows how. The Conversation. January 20, 2026. <https://theconversation.com/fighting-climate-change-in-the-sahel-is-worsening-conflicts-new-research-shows-how-273673>

132 *Global Sustainable Development Report 2023*. Page 66.

133 UN-Habitat. (2022). *New Urban Agenda implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review in preparation for the second Quadrennial report*. Page 38.

134 Edmond, C. and Geldard R. (2025). ‘Sponge cities’ can help protect against flooding. Here’s how. World Economic Forum. August 19, 2025. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/08/flood-climate-change-sponge-cities/>

135 UN-Habitat. (2024). *World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action*. Page 111.

136 Government of Kenya. (2025). *Kenya National Progress Report on the New Urban Agenda (NUA)*. Page 30.

137 *Tanzania New Urban Agenda (NUA) Second Implementation Report, 2025*. Page 70.

138 UN-Habitat. (2022). *New Urban Agenda implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review in preparation for the second Quadrennial report*. Page 37.

resilience. In the Southern African region, the trend is moving toward formalising the relationship between local governments and international agencies to unlock climate and infrastructure funding. On mitigation, the sub-region has focused on integrated human settlements to reduce urban sprawl and transport-related emissions. On adaptation, there is emphasis on urban safety and the upgrading of informal settlements as a primary defense against climate-induced disasters (floods and fires). South Africa established a dedicated UN-Habitat Country Office to leverage global expertise for its Breaking New Ground policy, which integrates housing with sustainable spatial planning to mitigate climate risks¹³⁹. In East Africa, countries are promoting low-carbon climate-resilient infrastructure and implementing nature-based solutions and watershed management to prevent urban flooding. For example, the Kenyan Habitat Country Programme Document (HCPD) 2023–2027¹⁴⁰, prioritises the green economy and disaster risk management as strategies to protect vulnerable urban communities from extreme weather. Ethiopia focuses on prosperous and green cities through the integration of displaced communities into urban centers and developing green spaces via watershed management¹⁴¹. In West Africa, all the 261(100%) local government authorities (MMDAs) in Ghana have adopted and implementing local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework (MTNDPF)¹⁴².

These strategies reflect that while the environmental hazards facing African countries are intensifying, so too is the sophistication of the strategic response in the continent. Through a combination of nature-based solutions (agroforestry, mangrove restoration, reforestation), disaster-risk financing, community engagement and inclusion of traditional knowledge, digitalisation (high-tech early warning systems and use of GIS and smart city technologies for resilience mapping, and informal settlement resilience and pro-poor policy frameworks, the continent is laying the groundwork for a resilient urban future under the New Urban Agenda.

Air pollution

Africa's air pollution burden is exacerbated by rapid urbanisation, unregulated industrialisation, and domestic use of fossil fuels for household energy use. Key anthropogenic sources include transport emissions, industrial activities, open waste burning, and biomass fuel combustion, complemented by natural contributions such as dust storms and harmattan winds¹⁴³. Since 2020, there has been increasing levels of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) in many urban centers, with concentrations varying widely across regions: for example, from approximately 19 µg/m³ in Bamako to over 63 µg/m³ in Kano.

Air pollution is a leading health risk. Prior to 2022, it contributed to over 1.1 million deaths in Africa,

139 Republic of South Africa (2022). Republic of South Africa Country Report: Progress on Implementation of the New Agenda. June, 2022. <https://www.sacities.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/SA-NUA-REPORT-final-15122022-compressed.pdf>

140 United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (2023). Kenya Habitat Country Programme Document 2023-2027. UN-Habitat, Kenya. <https://kenyamissionhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Kenya-Habitat-Country-Programme-Documents-2023-27.pdf>

141 UN-Habitat (2025). Normative and operational activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, including updates on the Ethiopia and Central America programmes, capacity-development initiatives, urban crises prevention and response, and activities for the period July–December 2024. UN-Habitat. January 21, 2025. Nairobi. <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2025/02/2500890e.pdf>

142 Republic of Ghana (2025). Country Progress Report on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Ghana. Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs. https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Ghana-National-Report_0.pdf

143 Health Effects Institute. 2022. The State of Air Quality and Health Impacts in Africa. A Report from the State of Global Air Initiative. Boston, MA:Health Effects Institute.

and current trends suggest similar magnitudes¹⁴⁴. Household air pollution accounted for more than 60% of pollution-attributed deaths, largely due to reliance on fossil fuels for cooking. Long-term exposure to PM_{2.5} and ground-level ozone is associated with cardiovascular, respiratory, and neurological conditions, as well as increased childhood respiratory infections. Economic impacts are significant, with health damages accounting for roughly 6–6.5% of GDP in highly affected parts of Niger and Somalia.

Advances in data availability between 2022 and 2025 improved the spatial and temporal resolution of air quality information. Efforts included¹⁴⁵ expansion of regulatory and air quality monitoring in cities like Lagos, Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Kigali, and Kampala¹⁴⁶. These are largely supported by research-led collaborations such as the AirQo, CLEAN-Air Africa, and DS-I Africa which install low-cost sensor networks, and provide the technical capacity required to conduct air quality monitoring and related health analyses.

These initiatives have enhanced accurate mapping of PM_{2.5}, NO₂, SO₂, VOCs, and ozone, as well as trends over time, enabling data-driven interventions. The efforts are helping fill critical gaps in a region with limited government-led monitoring activities. Such collaborative models have the potential to transform the air quality landscape in Africa and generate crucial data for decision-making and tracking progress.

Other policy-driven mitigation strategies include

the launch of the 18.3 km electric BRT system in Dakar, Senegal¹⁴⁷, the adoption of national air quality standards in Uganda, and the development of nationally determined contributions by Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Togo, thus leading the way on integrated action for air pollution and climate change response¹⁴⁸.

While incremental improvements in PM_{2.5} levels in cities with targeted interventions are observed, substantial health burdens persist. Regional inequities remain pronounced: urban hubs with rapid industrial growth experienced the poorest air quality, whereas smaller cities benefited more from localised preventive measures. Noteworthy, partnership-driven approaches facilitated knowledge sharing, capacity building, and evidence-based decision-making, providing a framework to accelerate continental clean air initiatives.

2.3.2. Facilitating the sustainable management of resources

Over the past 5 years, the implementation of the NUA has been increasingly defined by a shift towards circularity, decarbonisation, and the preservation of natural resources. As urbanisation increases, the management of water, waste, energy, and ecosystems becomes a more important part of national, city, and municipal development strategies. This is particularly important, as African economies are largely dependent on healthy terrestrial ecosystems¹⁴⁹.

144 Health Effects Institute (2022). More than 1 million deaths linked to air pollution exposure in Africa. https://www.stateofglobalair.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-10/the-state-of-air-quality-and-health-impacts-in-africa-press-release_0.pdf

145 Takal, S.U., Tahiru, A.W. & Owusu-Sekyere, E. Evaluating advanced strategies for air pollution control in Africa: a systematic review. *Discov Environ* 3, 297 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44274-025-00494-2>

146 Okure, D., AirQo and Pallavi Pant, & Health Effects Institute (2025). Advancing clean air in Africa: Data, solutions and partnerships. July 17, 2025. Clean Air Fund. <https://www.cleanairfund.org/news-item/advancing-clean-air-in-africa/>

147 Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (2024). Dakar, Senegal's Electric BRT Leads the Way for African Cities. ITDP. March 22, 2024. <https://itdp.org/2024/03/22/dakar-senegals-electric-brt-leads-the-way-for-african-cities/>

148 Global Climate & Health Alliance (2023). Clean Air NDC Scorecard 2023. <https://climateandhealthalliance.org/clean-air-ndc-scorecard-2023/>

149 United Nations. (2017). *Habitat III regional report: Africa: Transformational housing and sustainable urban development in Africa*. Page 75.

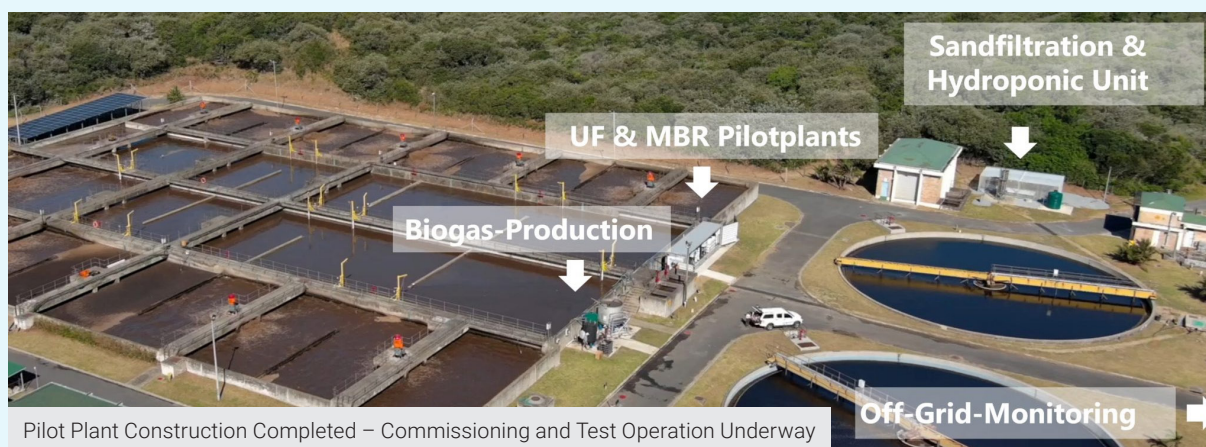
Realising its heavy reliance on the fisheries sector (which employs about 20% of the labour force); and the illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, plastic pollution, and climate change threatening the balance of the ocean's ecosystems and strain marine resources, Ghana developed a Sustainable Ocean Plan (SOP) (2025-2030) to implement the Ocean Panel's transformations agenda which incorporates six thematic pillars (ocean wealth, ocean health, ocean equity, ocean knowledge, ocean finance, and marine security)¹⁵⁰.

In the Municipality of Mbabane, Eswatini, has committed funds for invasive species prevention and control, as well as the establishment of a botanical garden through the Integrated Development Plan (2024-2029)¹⁵¹. The ecReUse project in the Eastern Cape, South Africa aims to improve water and energy security by reducing energy consumption in wastewater treatment, generating biogas, and purifying wastewater for safe industrial or agricultural use¹⁵².

Box 4. The ecReUse project in Eastern Cape, South Africa

The ecReUse project was established to improve water and energy security in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. By restructuring the operation of a wastewater treatment plant, the project reduces the plant's energy consumption, generates biogas for energy production and utilises various water treatment technologies to purify the water so that it can be used safely in industry or agriculture for food production. As part of the project, demonstration plants for decentralised wastewater treatment and subsequent water reuse, as well as systems for sustainable energy generation, are being implemented at a wastewater treatment plant in East London.

The project follows an integrated Nexus approach, focusing on the interconnection of water, energy, and agriculture, often referred to as the Water-Energy-Food Nexus. The project is anchored on a comprehensive communication strategy. Citizens, political decision-makers and industrial and agricultural companies are informed about the results achieved, which contributes to the dissemination of the technologies.



Source: ecReUse¹⁵³

150 Republic of Ghana (2025). Ghana Sustainable Ocean Plan(2025 – 2030). <https://sdgsghana.gov.gh/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/GHANA-SUSTAINABLE-OCEAN-PLAN.pdf>

151 City of Mbabane Eswatini: Comprehensive Sustainable Development Goals Voluntary Local Review Report 2025. https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/vlrs/2025-08/city_of_mbabane_sdq_vlr_report_2025.pdf

152 Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality (2025). Voluntary Local Review (VLR) Report 2024/2025. https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2026-03/VLR_Buffalo_City_2025.pdf

153 <https://ecreuse.net/>

Biodiversity has been integrated into many city plans across East Africa. In 2024, the Kenya Forest Service launched its Strategic Plan 2023–2027¹⁵⁴ to increase national tree cover to 21% by 2027. This was complemented by the Forest Conservation and Management (Amendment) Bill 2025, which introduces “Payment for Ecosystem Services” (PES) to incentivise urban and peri-urban forest preservation.

The Kigali City Master Plan 2050¹⁵⁵, with significant updates implemented in 2023 and 2024, enforces “Green Growth” zones, which mandated the protection of wetlands and the creation of “urban lung” green spaces (Kigali City, 2023).

Similarly, Republic of Congo expanded its Urban Forest Strategy in 2023 to utilize nature-based solutions to mitigate the city’s high flood risks, prioritizing community-led planting guidelines that safeguard indigenous biodiversity. In South Africa, the National Biodiversity Economy Strategy (NBES)¹⁵⁶ was revised in 2024 to align with the Global Biodiversity Framework.

It explicitly links ecosystem restoration to ecological infrastructure, treating urban parks and natural drainage systems as essential municipal assets. Through the NBES, over R500 million of private investment has been unlocked, with over 1000 jobs created, and over 1000 SMMEs trained.

Waste management

Solid waste management is a visible challenge in many African cities, contributing land and water pollution, often leading to loss of biodiversity and impacting human health.

In Nigeria despite 43% of the waste stream being compostable, the country’s recycling rate is only 0.24%¹⁵⁷, highlighting a massive, untapped opportunity for organic waste valorisation. Ghana on the other hand is establishing recycling plants across all its regions, complemented by a dedicated Electronic Waste Recycling Facility¹⁵⁸.

Tanzania has implemented several measures including the Electronic Waste Management Regulations (2021), banning the importation and use of single-use plastic bags, and provided financial and innovation incentives to support waste recycling and reuse initiatives.

In Lesotho, urban waste management is being converted from a pollution source into an energy asset by extracting landfill gas to generate 20 MWh of electricity¹⁵⁹. The Uganda Support to Municipal Infrastructure Development - Additional Financing program¹⁶⁰ resulted in the preparation of Solid Waste Management strategies for 22 Urban Local Governments

Malawi, in addition to the National Sanitation Policy, also launched the National Clean-up Day Campaign to promote good hygiene practices in urban areas¹⁶¹.

154 Kenya Country Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027. World Food Programme. <https://www.wfp.org/operations/ke02-kenya-country-strategic-plan-2023-2027>

155 The City of Kigali. The city of Kigali launches new master plan 2050. <https://www.kigalicity.gov.rw/news-detail/city-of-kigali-launches-new-master-plan-2050>

156 <https://biodiversityinvestment.environment.gov.za/biodiversity-economy>

157 First Report on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Nigeria. Pages 152–153.

158 Ghana National Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Page 49.

159 Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police (2026). The Lesotho National Report on the New Urban Agenda. January 26, 2026. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Lesotho-National-Report-2026.pdf>

160 Uganda National Report (2025). Progress on the New Urban Agenda. August 8, 2025. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Uganda-National-Report-2025.pdf>

161 Republic of Malawi Ministry of Local Government, Unity and Culture (2025). Implementation of the New Urban Agenda: National Update Report 2025. August 19, 2025. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Malawi-National-Report-2025.pdf>

The Lilongwe Water and Sanitation Project¹⁶² focuses on connecting households to the city's sewerage network in Lilongwe City, rehabilitating and expanding the sewerage network, and targeting poor and vulnerable households for support in improving their sanitation facilities.

Energy efficiency

To meet global climate targets, the annual energy-intensity improvement rate must double from 1.4% currently to 3.4%¹⁶³. African cities are responding to this by integrating energy efficiency into building construction and retrofitting. South Africa incentivised this through the Energy Efficiency and Demand Side Management Grant, which subsidises municipal infrastructure upgrades¹⁶⁴.

In East Africa, Kenya's Homa Bay Affordable Housing Project became the first on the continent to receive "Excellence in Design for Greater Efficiencies (EDGE) certification"¹⁶⁵. This project utilizes passive cooling and energy-saving lighting to reduce the long-term carbon footprint of low-income housing¹⁶⁶. Kenya is in fact a global outlier, with 91.1% of its domestic electricity generated from renewable sources (primarily geothermal energy) in 2024¹⁶⁷.

South Africa's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement (REIPPP) has revolutionised the market, driving solar prices down to \$0.05/kWh¹⁶⁸. Botswana and Nigeria are also scaling up, with Nigeria targeting a 36% renewable share by 2030 through its Renewable Energy Master Plan (REMP)¹⁶⁹.

Box 5. Kenya energy project

Kenya is leveraging the East African Rift Valley's vast potential for geothermal power to establish itself as a regional pioneer in the renewable transition. Central to this effort is the integration of energy efficiency into the built environment, exemplified by the Homa Bay Affordable Housing Project. This initiative secured EDGE (Excellence in Design for Greater Efficiencies) certification by incorporating passive design principles such as natural lighting, ventilation, and the strategic North-South alignment of buildings to reduce thermal gain. Furthermore, the project utilizes environmentally friendly Appropriate Building Technologies (ABTs), including Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) panels, which reduce construction time by 30 per cent while enhancing the thermal efficiency and sustainability of the urban housing stock.

This building-level efficiency is supported by a robust national grid that, as of 2024, generated 91.1 per cent of domestic electricity from renewable sources. Geothermal energy serves as the primary driver at 44.2 per cent, followed by hydro (28.9 per cent), wind (14.3 per cent), and solar (3.7 per cent).

162 ibid

163 United Nations. (2023). The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023. Page 37.

164 Republic of South Africa. (2022). South Africa Country Report: Progress on Implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Page 116.

165 Government of Kenya. (2025). *Kenya National Progress Report on the New Urban Agenda (NUA)*. Page 13.

166 Ibid

167 [https://www.cif.org/news/project-spotlight-final-stretch-100-clean-power-kenya-leads-learns-and-clears-few-hurdles#:~:text=A%20leader%20in%20progress%20to,African%20Development%20Bank%20\(AfDB\).](https://www.cif.org/news/project-spotlight-final-stretch-100-clean-power-kenya-leads-learns-and-clears-few-hurdles#:~:text=A%20leader%20in%20progress%20to,African%20Development%20Bank%20(AfDB).)

168 UN-Habitat. (2022). New Urban Agenda implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review in preparation for the second Quadrennial report. Page 37.

169 Federal Ministry of Works and Housing. (2022). *First Report on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Nigeria*. Page 80.

This transition is codified in the Energy Act 2019, which established feed-in tariffs to catalyse private sector participation and mandated the zero-rating of taxes for renewable energy equipment. Such interventions actively decouple urban productivity from fossil fuels, contributing to a lower national carbon footprint

Source: Ministry of Lands, Public Works, Housing and Urban Development. (2025). Kenya National Progress Report on the New Urban Agenda (NUA) 2025. Government of Kenya.

Zimbabwe banned electric geysers in favour of mandatory solar water heaters for all new houses¹⁷⁰. In Zambia, informal settlement upgrading routinely includes solar-powered street lighting, which not only reduces carbon emissions but also extends economic hours and enhances safety for residents. The African Energy Transition Strategy¹⁷¹ drives the adoption of solar and wind energy into public infrastructure and residential housing in South Africa. The Durban Renewable Energy Roadmap, uses a “Solar Map” GIS tool to identify optimal rooftops for solar PV.

The city implemented a Feed-in Tariff (FiT) allowing residents to sell excess energy back to the grid. The outcome of this is that over 5,000 households and businesses adopted solar, creating 1,500 local technical jobs and reducing the city’s dependence on the national coal-fired grid by 12%. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA, 2023) notes that financing remains the primary bottleneck for scaling these initiatives. Furthermore, the World Bank (2023) emphasizes that decentralised waste and energy solutions are often more effective in Africa’s rapidly growing secondary cities than large-scale centralized grids.

Natural resource management

Sustainable management of natural resources is the final pillar of the NUA implementation in Africa. This effort aligns with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which seeks to protect 30% of the earth’s surface by 2030¹⁷². Tanzania has demonstrated significant commitment by protecting 1,213 water resources and maintaining 33% of its total land as reserved protected areas. Botswana exceeds this, dedicating 42% of its land to conservation, with the city of Maun specifically zoned as a green city to harmonise eco-tourism with resource efficiency¹⁷³.

In West Africa, Ghana’s Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Strategy provides a framework for managing its 500-kilometre coastline¹⁷⁴. Malawi’s Lilongwe Master Plan preserves 22,000 hectares for wildlife and recreation, ensuring that urban expansion does not come at the cost of biodiversity¹⁷⁵.

170 Ministry of National Housing and Social Amenities. (2022). *Republic of Zimbabwe Country Report on Progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA)*. Page 17.

171 The African Energy Commission (no date). The African Energy Transition Strategy and Action Plan. September 2025. <https://au-afrec.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/ETSAP%20Report%20publication.pdf>

172 Convention on Biological Diversity (2022). Decision adopted by the conference of the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. UN Environment Programme. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-15/cop-15-dec-04-en.pdf>

173 Ministry of Land Management, Water and Sanitation Services. (2021). *Botswana National Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Page 22.

174 Ministry of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development. (2025). *Ghana National Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Page 47.

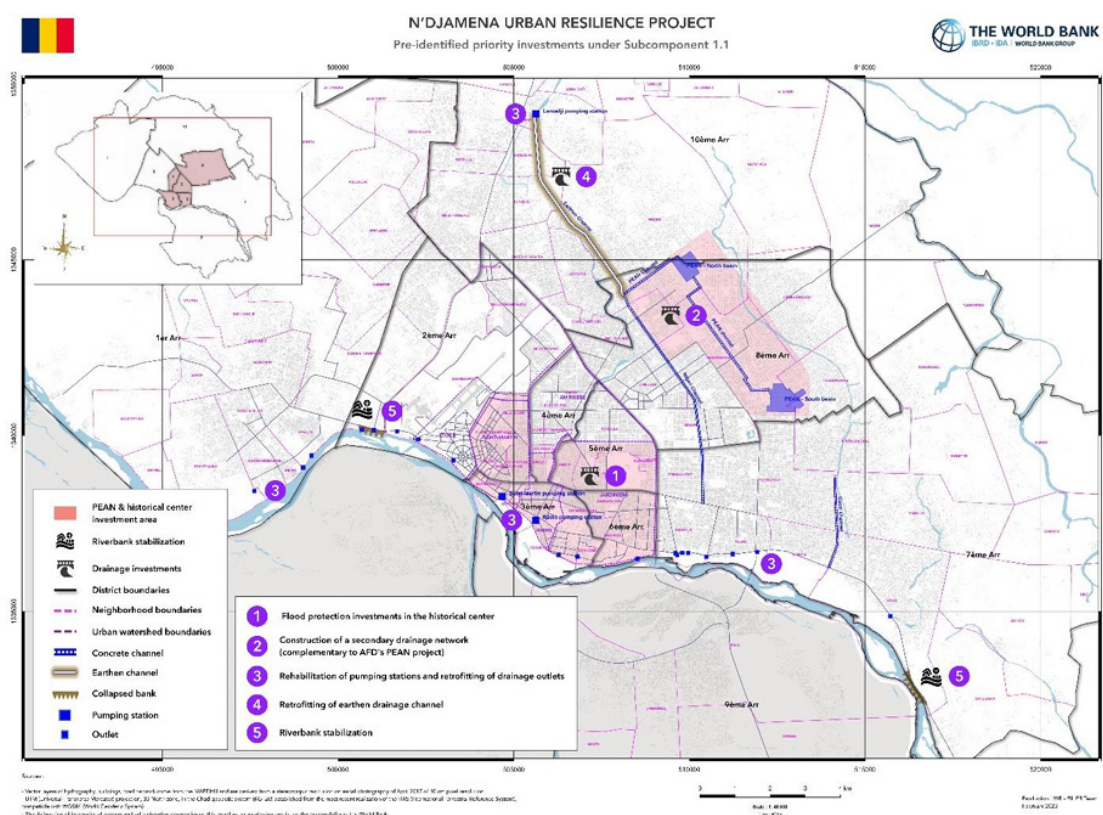
175 Ministry of Local Government, Unity and Culture. (2025). *Implementation of the New Urban Agenda: National Update Report-2025*. Page 60.

Furthermore, the African Cities Water Adaptation Fund (ACWA) and the CAPE initiative (2024) are mobilising funds specifically for nature-based carbon projects across Kenya, Nigeria, and Zambia to protect urban biodiversity.

Between 2022 and 2025, ecosystem-based solutions were accelerated through initiatives like the \$260 million Msimbazi Basin project in Tanzania¹⁷⁶, integrating river restoration and wetland rehabilitation with engineered infrastructure to mitigate catastrophic urban flooding.

The N'Djamena Urban Resilience Project (2023) in Chad, and the Chiveve River Green Park (2024) in Mozambique combined traditional drainage with green spaces to absorb rainwater and reduce the extreme urban heat island effect.

The SUNCASA project (2024) launched efforts to plant over 2 million trees in Kigali and 1.3 million in Dire Dawa to replenish groundwater and stabilize slopes in landslide-prone urban areas.



Box 6. Case study: The N'Djamena Urban Resilience Project (2023) for Chad

To address Chad's critical climate adaptation need, the N'Djamena Urban Resilience Project¹⁷⁷ was launched in 2022. The Project aims to reduce flood risk and strengthen climate resilient urban planning. It project focuses on four components: constructing and rehabilitating key drainage, flood protection infrastructure, improving solid waste and water management systems, and supporting resilient urban planning and community-based adaptation initiatives.

176 Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development. (2025). *Tanzania New Urban Agenda (NUA) Second Implementation Report, 2025*. Page 83.

177 World Bank. Chad - N'Djamena Urban Resilience Project (English). Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099141503142324665>

It also provides technical assistance to municipal and national authorities to improve disaster preparedness, environmental management, and long-term city planning.

The eight year project is supported by the World Bank and UNDP. Some achievements include the initiation of the \$7M N'Gueli dike reinforcement, the dredging campaign for drains and expanding pumping capacity at Lamadji Station, commencement of the Pluvial and Fluvial Flood Risk Management Master Plan and updating the Urban Development Masterplan to combat climate risk. Community-based programs that target female leadership in disaster preparedness and provide small investments for community co-benefits have also been launched.

Source: World Bank¹⁷⁸

2.3.3. Strengthening the resilience of cities and human settlements

Efforts to strengthen resilience across Africa are being advanced primarily through climate, energy and risk-reduction solutions in addition to urban resilience initiatives. City Resilience strategies, through the 100 Resilience Cities (now Global Resilience Cities Network) has resulted in nine cities launching city resilience strategies. They include, Dakar, Accra, Lagos, Cape Town, Durban, and Addis Ababa¹⁷⁹ alongside three South African cities - Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban¹⁸⁰.

Cities such as Bargny (Senegal), Kaédi (Mauritania), Nioro (Mali), Kongoussi (Burkina Faso), Tillabéri (Niger), Labondo (Nigeria), and Mao (Chad), have implemented urban resilience programmes with the support of the World Bank and/or UNHabitat using the City Resilience Action Planning Tool (CityRAP)¹⁸¹.

Through the C40 Climate Action Planning (CAP) Africa Programme, eleven cities in Africa have developed or pledged to deliver robust, evidence-based, and long-term climate action plans¹⁸². By early 2025, C40-supported cities in the African sub-region were actively working to enhance urban resilience, with 23 mayors highlighting the need for continued investment in climate adaptation¹⁸³. At the community resilience level, The Building with the Urban Poor Strategy in Kenya was launched in 2023¹⁸⁴.

2.3.4. Environmental sustainability & climate resilience

The implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) in Sub-Saharan Africa is characterized by a situation where rapid urban growth intersects with escalating climatic hazards. Since 2022, the continent has moved from reactive disaster management toward integrated resilience frameworks that prioritise nature-based solutions

178 <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099141503142324665/pdf/BOSIB-d0e06a5e-865c-429f-b1fc-7dcb7e7c7fb1.pdf>

179 UN-Habitat. (2022). *New Urban Agenda implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review in preparation for the second Quadrennial report*. Page 36.

180 UK Government (2022). UK-South Africa Urban Resilience Programme. Gov.UK. November 30, 2022. <https://www.gov.uk/international-development-funding/uk-south-africa-urban-resilience-programme>

181 United Nations Development Programme (2023). Actions for a Resilient City: Tillabéri Commits to CityRAP. United Nations Development Programme. June 1, 2023. <https://www.undp.org/africa/press-releases/actions-resilient-city-tillaberi-commits-cityrap>

182 C40 Cities (2022). C40 Cities: Climate Action Implementation Programme. <https://www.c40.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/C40-CAI-Programme-summary.pdf>

183 C40 Cities (2025). Highlights: UrbanShift Africa Forum. C40 Cities. February 27, 2025. <https://www.c40.org/news/highlights-urbanshift-africa-forum/>

184 Government of Kenya. (2025). *Kenya National Progress Report on the New Urban Agenda (NUA)*. Page 30.

and sustainable energy transitions. As African cities contend with climate vulnerability, the strategic responses reflect a localised approach to safeguard human life, critical infrastructure, and economic stability.

Since 2022, the frequency of extreme weather events have resulted in climate-induced displacement, forcing millions of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to settle in unserviced urban peripheries. This displacement compounds existing social tensions and heightens the vulnerability of households residing in informal settlements, which often lack basic sanitation and stormwater management systems.

A critical thematic shift observed since 2022 is the mainstreaming of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) as a primary defense mechanism. Governments are increasingly leveraging ecological restoration -such as mangrove planting in coastal zones and urban reforestation in Sahelian cities - to mitigate cyclical flooding and the urban heat island effect.

Furthermore, the energy transition has emerged as a cornerstone of the sustainability agenda, with a focus on decoupling urban development from fossil-fuel systems and upscaling decentralised renewable energy to improve access for the urban poor.

Despite these strategic shifts, persistent challenges hamper the full implementation of the New Urban Agenda's resilience commitments. These include infrastructure financing, structural informality, data scarcity, energy poverty and topographical vulnerability. Action taken in Comoros was the establishment of a national agency for the promotion of investments for resilient urban infrastructure. Djibouti's policy response emphasizes "sponge city" designs

and the restoration of blue-green infrastructure to manage stormwater and protect critical port infrastructure. Statistical progress is evident, with slum residency falling from 76.7% in 2000 to 48.7% in 2022. In Madagascar, a major success is the restoration of the Kianjavato Classified Forest, where over 3 million trees have been planted as ecological protective barriers to safeguard urban dwellers from flooding and landslides.

Following the 2023 Nairobi Declaration at the inaugural Africa Climate Summit, Kenya amended its Climate Change Act (2023)¹⁸⁵ to establish a comprehensive legal framework for carbon markets. This allows Kenyan cities to monetize emission reductions from urban forestry and waste management projects to fund local adaptation. Similarly, Rwanda officially launched the Green City Kigali Master Plan¹⁸⁶ in September 2024 to serve as a blueprint for "net-zero" urbanism.

By late 2024, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) approved \$2.2 million in initial disbursements for the project's pilot phase, targeting the construction of 1,700 - 2,000 climate-compatible housing units by 2025.

Eswatini's participation in the Southern African Solar Thermal Training and Demonstration Initiative (SOLTRAIN) facilitates a move away from coal-dependent regional grids toward sustainable solar thermal infrastructure.. In July 2024, South Africa signed the Climate Change Act (No. 22 of 2024)¹⁸⁷ into law. This landmark act mandates that every municipality in the country to develop and implement a climate change response and adaptation plan, effectively decentralizing climate accountability to the local level.

Mozambique has operationalised urban shock-proofing through the Mozambique Cities and

185 Oraro & Company (2023). The Climate Change (Amendment) Act, 2023. September 2023. <https://www.oraro.co.ke/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/The-Climate-Change-Amendment-Act-2023.pdf>

186 Kigali City (2024). Press Release: City of Kigali Launches Green City Kigali Master Plan for Kinyinya Hill. Kigali City. <https://www.kigalicity.gov.rw/news-detail/press-release-city-of-kigali-launches-green-city-kigali-master-plan-for-kinyinya-hill>

187 Republic of South Africa (2024). Climate Change Act 22 of 2024. <https://cer.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Climate-Change-Act-22-of-2024.pdf>

Climate Project. In Beira, “hard” engineering (drainage systems) is integrated with NbS, including the planting of 7,000 trees. In Quelimane, the Coastal City Adaptation Project (CCAP) employs gender-sensitive capacity building, training female residents to manage mangrove seedlings as natural storm barriers.

Furthermore, the Chamanculo neighbourhood in Maputo serves as a pilot for collectively owned solar infrastructure, providing solar lamps and charging kiosks. In West Africa, interventions link environmental resilience with spatial planning to manage rapid urbanisation and displacement.

These include the Bamako Urban Resilience Project (PRUBA), the Ghana National Disaster Management and Risk Finance Strategy Framework and Implementation Plan (2025–2030)¹⁸⁸, and the 2025 Accra Climate Action Plan. In Senegal, the city of Thiès gained international recognition in 2024 for its community-led nature-based solutions (NbS).

Local authorities mapped over 139 NbS initiatives - ranging from urban market gardening to reforestation - to regulate runoff and reduce the urban heat island effect in high-density districts¹⁸⁹.

188 UNDP (2025). UNDP Hands Over National Disaster Management and Risk Finance Strategy Framework to Strengthen Ghana's Climate Resilience. UNDP. January 29, 2026. <https://www.undp.org/ghana/press-releases/undp-hands-over-national-disaster-management-and-risk-finance-strategy-framework-strengthen-ghanas-climate-resilience>

189 *Toure, M.N., Dia, A., & Datt, F. (2025)*. Reducing urban flood risk through nature-based adaptation and resilience in Senegal. November 3, 2025. Climate Resilience Alliance. <https://zcralliance.org/blogs/nature-based-solutions-in-thies/>

Chapter Three

3.0. Effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda

Implementing the New Urban Agenda requires an admix of investments in hard infrastructure, governance reforms and capacity strengthening of urban planning and management systems.

3.1. Urban governance structures

Urban governance is broadly defined as the ways individuals and institutions, both public and private, plan and manage the common affairs of the city¹⁹⁰. For the NUA's implementation to be effective, African nations are building governance structures that transition from rigid, top-down models to supportive, integrated frameworks, inclusive, participatory, and accountable urban management. Governance responses have been guided by the Harmonized Regional Framework for the NUA

Niger's 2017–2021 Economic and Social Development Plan, elevated housing and urban quality of life to national priorities¹⁹¹. This strategic alignment is supported by institutional reforms that created a dedicated SDG monitoring division

within the Ministry of Planning¹⁹². Niger's approach leverages its central Ministry of Planning to bridge the gap between emergency social protection and long-term urban resilience. This framework promotes the integration of refugees and IDPs into city-level development plans to protect their rights to work and adequate shelter¹⁹³. Liberia¹⁹⁴, DR Congo and Guinea developed National Urban Policy (NUP) with support from UN-Habitat to establish an overarching coordinating framework and pilot programmes for decentralized fiscal management and coordinated erstwhile fragmented development programmes.

In Burundi, a central component of urban governance reform is the establishment of inter-ministerial structures, so that various government agencies to facilitate coherent and coordinated NUA and SDG implementation. Burundi is also receiving technical support from UNHabitat for the development of its national urban policy following earlier engagement on the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP)¹⁹⁵, where the government utilized urban profiling to conduct city-wide overviews and needs assessments. Despite these institutional strides, limited technical and financial resources are bottlenecks hindering the effective uptake of recommendations. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) enacted the Land-Use Planning Law (2025), which works in synergy with the National Adaptation Plan

190 UN-Habitat. (2022). *The Global Urban Monitoring Framework Metadata*. Page 47.

191 UN-Habitat. (2022). New Urban Agenda implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review in preparation for the second Quadrennial report. Page 22.

192 Ibid

193 République du Sénégal. (2021). Rapport du Sénégal sur la mise en œuvre du nouveau agenda urbain. Page 20.

194 UN-Habitat. (2022). New Urban Agenda implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review in preparation for the second Quadrennial report. Page 45.

195 United Nations. (2017). Habitat III regional report: Africa: Transformational housing and sustainable urban development in Africa. Page 68.

(2022–2026) to provide a more coherent basis for territorial development and climate resilience. Institutional capacity for social inclusion has also been expanded through the establishment of a Ministry in charge of People living with Disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

Inclusive, implementable and participatory urban policies

Many African countries have advanced National Urban Policies (NUPs) or related frameworks since 2022, focusing on sustainable development, slum upgrading, and urban resilience¹⁹⁶. They have largely been supported by UN-Habitat. They include Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Senegal¹⁹⁷. Comoros was supported in developing a National Urban Planning and Housing policy. Niger State in Nigeria was supported by UNHabitat in developing an urban policy in 2020 and has begun implementing relevant pilot projects. Burundi, Malawi, Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Africa have been actively engaged with UN-Habitat in refining or developing their urban policies and strategies¹⁹⁸, while Abidjan commenced a new phase of the National Participatory Slum Upgrading programme.

South Africa¹⁹⁹. Through the Ministry of Human Settlements and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) lead the localisation of the NUA, ensuring that local government regulations align with global sustainability standards²⁰⁰.

In Tanzania, the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development (MLHSD) provides the policy and legal backbone, while the President's Office Local Government and Regional Administration (PO-RALG) facilitate implementation through local authorities²⁰¹. In Eswatini, many towns have Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), Town Planning Schemes, and Local Economic Development (LED) strategies; but there is inadequate technical and financial resources to implement these strategies²⁰².

Multi-stakeholder partnerships, coordination and cooperation among national, subnational, and local governments across all sectors

Decentralisation is a fundamental driver of change for sustainable urban development²⁰³. It brings decision-making closer to the citizens, ensuring that service delivery is responsive to local needs.

While several African countries have adopted some form of citywide administrative system as part of their decentralisation efforts, several others lack a democratically elected, autonomous mayoral system and so rely on central government appointees, collective councils, or multi-tiered systems where no single city-wide administrative structure exists. While **Seychelles** and **Angola**, for example, have mayors appointed by the national government for their capital cities²⁰⁴, **Sudan** and **South Sudan** have seen previously established local governance systems suspended due to

196 United Nations. (2025). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025*. Page 46.

197 UN-Habitat. (2022). *New Urban Agenda implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review in preparation for the second Quadrennial report*. Page 49.

198 Ibid.

199 Republic of South Africa. (2022). *South Africa Country Report: Progress on Implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Page 39.

200 Ibid

201 Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development. (2025). *Tanzania New Urban Agenda (NUA) Second Implementation Report, 2025*. Page 99.

202 Kingdom of Eswatini (2026). New Urban Agenda Implementation Report 2026. https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-02/Eswatini-National-Report-2026_0.pdf

203 UN-Habitat. (2022). *New Urban Agenda implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review in preparation for the second Quadrennial report*. Page 47.

204 179 <https://www.countryreports.org/country/Seychelles/government.htm>

ongoing instability. In Nigeria, where there is no city-level government, state governors act as mayors for the capital cities and may devolve their powers through a Metropolitan Area Development Authority with an appointed official to oversee the capital city jurisdiction. This model is in operation in Kaduna, Kano, Rivers and Enugu states with varying degrees of success.

Tanzania pioneered the “Decentralisation by Devolution” (D by D) policy in 1998, which devolved functional responsibilities and discretionary powers in planning, budgeting, and administration to local levels²⁰⁵. In Senegal, “L’acte III de la décentralisation” (2013) granted more responsibilities to local authorities, centring the framework on communes and departments²⁰⁶. Burkina Faso follows a similar path, with its General Code of Territorial Collectivities conferring extended competencies in urbanism and equipment management to its regions and communes²⁰⁷.

However, the path to decentralisation is often hindered by a lack of fiscal autonomy. While Nigeria’s 1999 Constitution is based on the decentralisation of roles, local governments often lack the financial autonomy and clarity of constitutional roles required to function effectively²⁰⁸. True fiscal decentralisation enhances municipal finance by connecting the consumers of public services directly with local officials who determine fund allocations²⁰⁹.

Partnership with communities, civil society and the private sector

The implementation of the NUA requires multi-level and multi-scalar governance, between tiers of government and among various strata of society²¹⁰. South Africa’s District Development Model (DDM) is a prime example of an “all-of-government and all-of-society” approach²¹¹. In Senegal, the Diamniadio urban pole was realized through public-private partnership (PPPs), where the state provides the foundational infrastructure and the private sector provides the investment²¹². Ghana is also scaling up affordable housing projects through partnerships with private developers²¹³. The development of the Lagos Resilience Strategy was in collaboration with the University of Lagos Centre for Housing and Sustainable Development.

The NUA explicitly calls for the inclusion of non-state actors in the urban process. To enhance urban resilience, many cities are adopting hybrid governance or co-production models. Kenya is strengthening grassroots participation through ward development committees and digital platforms to ensure that urban policies address marginalized groups²¹⁴.

Furthermore, transnational networks such as the Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40), Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) help

205 Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development. (2025). *Tanzania New Urban Agenda (NUA) Second Implementation Report, 2025*. Page 96.

206 UN-Habitat. (2024). *World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action*. Page 259.

207 Ministère de l’Urbanisme et de l’Habitat. (2025). *Burkina Faso National Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Page 11.

208 Federal Ministry of Works and Housing. (2022). *First Report on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Nigeria*. Page 106.

209 UN-Habitat. (2022). *The Global Urban Monitoring Framework Metadata*. Page 52.

210 UN-Habitat. (2024). *World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action*. Page 254.

211 Republic of South Africa. (2022). *South Africa Country Report: Progress on Implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Department of Human Settlements. Page 91.

212 République du Sénégal. (2021). *Rapport du Sénégal sur la mise en œuvre du nouveau agenda urbain*. Page 32.

213 Ministry of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development. (2025). *Ghana National Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Page 52.

214 Government of Kenya. (2025). *Kenya National Progress Report on the New Urban Agenda (NUA)*. Page 30.

African cities pool resources and share expertise, amplifying their impact on the global stage²¹⁵. Slum Dwellers International affiliate federations are also active in many cities, actively contributing to ground level participatory urban planning and development²¹⁶. Community development organisations, traditional institutions and faith-based organisations wield significant influence at the local levels across the sub-region.

In Malawi, the Center for Community Organisation and Development (CCODE) and the National Habitat Committee ensure an active civil society presence in urban planning²¹⁷. Despite these efforts, participation gaps remain significant. As a 2024 survey revealed that only 19 per cent of African cities demonstrated strong civil society participation in urban planning²¹⁸.

Box 8: Lagos State resilience journey

In 2020, **Lagos State** launched Nigeria's first urban resilience strategy. The Lagos Resilience Strategy (LRS), was designed as a five-year roadmap (2020–2025) which resulted in a paradigm shift in the development agenda of Lagos State. Endemic challenges were no longer viewed merely as obstacles to development but were analysed through a “resilience lens” in order to ensure that solutions offered co-benefits for people, planet and prosperity. This was to safeguard the city against the acute shocks and chronic stresses that threaten its social and economic fabric, while simultaneously consolidating opportunities for economic development and social and environmental sustainability.

Through a focus on three pillars, ten goals and thirty one initiatives, the State was able to prioritise the most critical everyday and sudden challenges the city confronted. Core achievements in the last five years include the infrastructure upgrading, flood mapping and interventions in high-risk areas, participatory planning processes which has strengthened social inclusion and given vulnerable communities an opportunity to engage in the resilience discourse and consequent action, wetland restoration projects to mitigate erosion and storm surge, as well institutional monitoring and evaluation.

The Lagos State Resilience Office also supported the development of the Ajegunle Ikorodu Community Resilience Action plan and other community resilience assessments, in order to ensure targeted actions to address the critical challenges facing the state at both community and city levels.

The second edition of the LRS is currently being produced.

Source: Lagos Resilience Strategy²¹⁹ & Biennial Assessment of Lagos Resilience Strategy 2022²²⁰

215 UN-Habitat. (2022). *New Urban Agenda implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review in preparation for the second Quadrennial report*. Page 73.

216 Ibid

217 Ministry of Local Government, Unity and Culture. (2025). *Implementation of the New Urban Agenda: National Update Report-2025*. Page 69.

218 United Nations. (2025). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025*. Page 45.

219 Lagos State Resilience Office (2020). Lagos Resilience Strategy. Global Platform for Sustainable Cities. December 27, 2020. <https://www.thegpsc.org/knowledge-products/lagos-resilience-strategy>

220 https://www.thegpsc.org/sites/default/files/2025-10/lagos_resilience_strategy.pdf

Strengthening the capacity of subnational and local governments

The strengthening of subnational and local government capacity is a fundamental pillar for the effective implementation of the NUA in Africa. The success of the NUA largely depends on municipalities' ability to translate global aspirations, goals, and targets into tangible urban services, land management, and infrastructure.

Since 2022, the trajectory of urban governance in Sub-Saharan Africa has been defined by concerted efforts to expand the governance, financial and technical capacity of local authorities. There have been achievements in legislation, digitisation of municipal management, and the creation of innovative financing mechanisms.

South Africa has institutionalized localized fiscal accountability through the implementation of the District Development Model (DDM), which was further solidified in the 2022 - 2024 reporting cycle.²²¹ In Mozambique, through the Coastal City Adaptation Project (CCAP), local governments in Beira and Quelimane trained municipal staff and female community leaders in nature-based solution (NbS) management and disaster risk mapping. The expansion of the Kenya Informal Settlements Improvement Project (KISIP2)

provided technical training to municipal officials in 33 counties on land tenure regularisation and GIS-based infrastructure mapping²²². Similarly, Ethiopia in 2024 successfully implemented the Urban Institutional and Infrastructure Development Program (UIIDP), which uses a performance-based grant system to incentivise local governments to improve their financial auditing and urban planning standards²²³. As a result, 117 local governments established robust financial management systems, enhanced their governance procedures, and ensured timely audits.²²⁴ Ghana, Ghana had successfully transitioned several municipal authorities to digital property tax systems, significantly increasing internally generated funds for local resilience projects²²⁵.

Chad, the 2022–2026 National Development Plan has prioritized the training of local administrators in N'Djamena and other secondary cities on environmental resource management and flood-resilient urban layout²²⁶ while the Central African Republic (CAR), launched the National Gender and Climate Change Strategy in 2023. This strategy mandated local authorities to implement gender-sensitive budgeting, ensuring that municipal climate investments specifically address the needs of women and marginalized groups²²⁷.

221 Republic of South Africa (2022). Republic of South Africa Country Report: Progress on implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Urban Agenda Platform. December 21, 2022. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/SA%20NUA%20REPORT%20final%2015122022-compressed.pdf>

222 Republic of Kenya (2025). Kenya National Progress Report on the New Urban Agenda 2025. Augst 30, 2025. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Kenya-National-Report-2025-1.pdf>

223 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2023). Urban Institutional & Infrastructure Development Program II (Uiidp II). February 2023. https://www.mofed.gov.et/media/filer_public/b0/df/b0df5fd5-1a76-4a8e-b1fc-d0a7b28535ce/stakeholder_engagement_plan_uiidp_ii.pdf

224 United Nations (2025). Normative and operational activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, including updates on the Ethiopia and Central America programmes, capacity-development initiatives, urban crises prevention and response, and activities for the period July–December 2024. United Nations. <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2025/02/2500890e.pdf>

225 Government Of Ghana National Development Planning Commission (2021). National Medium-Term Development Policy Framework 2022-2025. December 2021. https://extranet.who.int/cpcd/sites/default/files/public_file_repository/GHA_Ghana_Medium-Term-National-Development-Policy-Framework_2022-2025.pdf

226 Republic of Chad (2021). Implementation Progress Report: Agenda 2063 In Chad. Ministry of Economy, Development Planning and International Cooperation

227 Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development (2023). Summary of the Central African Republic's National Gender and Climate Change Strategy for 2023–2030. November 2023. <https://napglobalnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/napgn-en-2023-central-africa-gender-climate-strategy-briefing-note.pdf>

These achievements show that the sub-regions moved away from top-down urban governance towards a more inclusive model. The key strategic intervention across all regions has been the shift toward performance-based grants and digital management systems, which provide local governments with both the incentive and the tools to manage urbanisation sustainably. While challenges such as the infrastructure financing gap remain, the legislative and technical foundations laid during this period have significantly bolstered the capacity of subnational authorities to lead the implementation of the NUA.

3.2. Planning and managing urban spatial development

Integrated urban and territorial planning

Efforts being made with respect to urban and territorial planning in Africa, focus largely on creating polycentric urban systems that link primary cities to secondary hubs while safeguarding ecological integrity.

In 2022, the strategic focus was on institutionalising multi-scalar integrated planning frameworks to ensure coherence across the urban-rural continuum, in the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The endorsement of the Harmonized Implementation Framework for the New Urban Agenda in Africa, which encourages member states to adapt their national plans to subregional and subnational realities was indicative²²⁸.

By 2023, the focus shifted toward scaling people-centered smart cities and addressing the housing challenge. Kenya's intensified the dissemination and implementation of the National Spatial Plan (2015-2045) and the County Spatial Plans²²⁹. A key technical milestone was the expansion of the Kenya Informal Settlements Improvement Project (KISIP 2), which used Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) to regularise tenure and integrate informal settlements into formal territorial maps²³⁰. By 2024, Tanzania expanded the Integrated Land Management Information System to 23 regions and 96 district land offices, enabling citizens to access land titles, cadastral maps, and plot data online. The country also successfully approved and implemented 28 master plans and issued 4,059,609 titles countrywide,²³¹. Uganda prepared a number of lower-level urban to actualize the NPDP and by so doing, increased the level of Physical Planning from 3% in 2015 to 34% in 2024. The country also gazetted 15 new cities to serve as centers of development within their given geographical territories. At the time of this reporting, 10 of the cities are already operational. The formal recognition of the Society of Physical Planners in Uganda as the professional body responsible for ensuring that physical planners nationwide have the necessary skills and resources to carry out their duties effectively is also noteworthy²³².

As of early 2025, Ethiopia finalized structural plans for secondary cities that integrate internally displaced persons (IDPs) into permanent, serviced urban layouts, transitioning from temporary humanitarian aid to sustainable urban integration.

228 United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2020). A Harmonized Implementation Framework for the New Urban Agenda in Africa. UNECA. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. <https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/TCND/ARFSD2021/Exhibition/A%20Harmonized%20Implementation%20Framework.pdf>

229 Government of Kenya. (2025). *Kenya National Progress Report on the New Urban Agenda (NUA)*. Page 21.

230 Republic of Kenya (2025). Kenya National Progress Report on the New Urban Agenda. 30 August 2025. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Kenya-National-Report-2025-1.pdf>

231 Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development. (2025). *Tanzania New Urban Agenda (NUA) Second Implementation Report, 2025*. Page 109.

232 Uganda National Report (2025). Progress on the New Urban Agenda. August 8, 2025. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Uganda-National-Report-2025.pdf>

By institutionalising integrated urban and territorial planning, African governments are ensuring that the spatial development of their cities is not only sustainable and resilient but also inclusive of the continent's most vulnerable populations. However, despite the progress, the effective coverage of national territories by urban planning documents remains low, with a rate of less than 20% as in the case of Senegal. Many local authorities, particularly in secondary and intermediate cities, still lack up-to-date or legally enforceable planning documents. Where they exist, their effective implementation remains limited.

Planned urban extensions and infill

Planned Urban Extensions (PUE) and Infill Development represent the two primary spatial strategies to combat urban sprawl. The goal of PUE is to secure public space, street grids, and utility corridors before settlement occurs, preventing the formation of new slums, while infill development focuses on building in and up by using vacant or underused land within existing city boundaries in order to increase density, optimise existing infrastructure, and reduce the need for long-distance commuting²³³.

A COVID-19 recovery strategy was the prioritization urban and slum upgrading programmes in Côte d'Ivoire. In 2022, Phase 3 of PSUP in Abidjan focused on infill strategies to enhance basic services in five high-density neighbourhoods.

Ethiopia's Urban Institutional and Infrastructure Development Program (UIIDP) serviced over 2,700 hectares of land for planned extensions across 117 local governments. This ensured that new growth areas were provided with roads and basic services, facilitating the creation of 1.15 million jobs²³⁴. In collaboration with UN-Habitat, Rwanda implemented planned city extensions in the secondary cities of Rubavu and Nyagatare. These plans project growth until 2045, securing arterial road grids before informal settlement can occur²³⁵.

In Malawi, several cities have successfully planned and formalised the extension of their administrative boundaries.²³⁶ Zambia's Housing and Urban Development (MIHUD) Strategic Plan focuses on the redevelopment of informal settlements, through replacing dilapidated structures with 2,000 new public and social housing units by 2026²³⁷.

In Tanzania, the Dar es Salaam Metropolitan Development Plan²³⁸ has extended infrastructure services to peri-urban areas such as Mbezi, Kisarawe II, and Kinyerezi, helping reduce uncoordinated sprawl. Infill development has been actively promoted in cities such as Arusha and Dodoma, where vacant or underutilized urban parcels have been targeted for densification to reduce land consumption and infrastructure costs.^{239 240} With UNOPS' support, the Government of Uganda piloted the Urban Expansion Planning program.

233 https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/How-to-drive-urban-infill-development-in-your-city?language=en_US

234 World Bank (2025). How an Urban Program in Ethiopia Delivered More than a Million Jobs. September 2, 2025. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2025/09/02/ethiopia-urban-institutional-and-infrastructure-development-program>

235 https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/21%20Projects%20Compendium_%20English.pdf

236 Ministry of Local Government, Unity and Culture. (2025). *Implementation of the New Urban Agenda: National Update Report-2025*. Page 74.

237 Republic of Zambia Ministry of Infrastructure, Housing and Urban Development (2022). 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. August 2022. <https://www.mihud.gov.zm/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2022-2026-STRATEGIC-PLAN-1.pdf>

238 The United Republic of Tanzania Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development (2025). National Progress Report On The Implementation Of The New Urban Agenda. September 2025. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Tanzania-National-Report.pdf>

239

240 UN-Habitat. (2022). *New Urban Agenda implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review in preparation for the second Quadrennial report*. Page 54.

This approach has been implemented in Cities of Mbale, Arua, Jinaj and the Municipality of Koboko. Senegal is developing eight economic zones as urban extensions that are inclusive and climate-resilient²⁴¹.

In summary, the sub-regions have adopted distinct spatial strategies to reconcile rapid population growth with the New Urban Agenda. East Africa has emerged as the most proactive hub for PUE. This sub-region uniquely prioritises large-scale satellite cities, while Southern Africa focuses heavily on infill development and administrative formalisation. West and Central Africa display a trend toward integrated territorial hubs and climate-resilient upgrading. Despite these regional variations, a shared challenge remains: reconciling ambitious master plans with chronic funding shortages and land scarcity.

Support for the implementation of urban planning strategies

Major policy and investment efforts have prioritised housing delivery, slum upgrading, and flood management, alongside greater use of public–private partnerships for housing and infrastructure and a growing emphasis on urban data systems and observatories, particularly in Ghana²⁴². In 2024, under the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF), Johannesburg scaled its “Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme” (UISP). Rather than relocating residents, the city provided in-situ tenure security and “starter core” service units (water and sanitation blocks).

The Urban Living Labs established in Kigali led to the training of local planners in gender-responsive urban design, with 150 municipal officials certified in climate-resilient planning. Uganda government remains committed to enhancing capacity-building initiatives for planners at sub national levels²⁴³. South Africa has a robust, well-established institutional environment to support urban planning and design and assist local government in its goal of spatial transformation. Several universities have urban planning, design and governance schools. Governmental structures that support the capacitation of urban planning, development and governance at the local level include the City Support Programme, the South African Local Government Association and the South African Cities Network. South African Council for Planners (SACPLAN), facilitates the engagement of registered planners in continuing professional development, through webinars, training and workshops²⁴⁴.

The cities are prioritising nature-based solutions and non-motorised transport, expanding pedestrian networks and green corridors to improve air quality and safety²⁴⁵. For instance, in 2023, as part of the #FreetownTheTreetown project, Freetown, Sierra Leone integrated nature-based solutions into its public spaces. This included creating green corridors and pedestrian-only zones in the central business district to combat the urban heat island effect. As a result, over 1.2 million trees were planted using a digital tracking app²⁴⁶, creating over 500 green jobs for youth and increasing the city’s canopy cover by 10% in priority areas.

241 UN-Habitat (2023). Country Brief Senegal 2023. UN-Habitat. https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2023/07/senegal_country_brief_final_en.pdf

242 Ministry of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development. (2025). *Ghana National Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Page 41.

243 Uganda National Report (2025). Progress on the New Urban Agenda. August 8, 2025. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Uganda-National-Report-2025.pdf>

244 Republic of South Africa (2022). Country Report: Progress on Implementation of the New Agenda. June 2022. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/SA%20NUA%20REPORT%20final%2015122022-compressed.pdf>

245 UN-Habitat. (2024). *World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action*. Page 226.

246 UN-Habitat. (2024). *World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action*. Page 232.

Culture-led planning in Africa integrates heritage with spatial design to foster social cohesion, preserve local identity, and drive inclusive development. Between 2023 and 2024, Accra adopted human-Centered Design principles that used participatory tools to ensure that public spaces reflect the cultural and social needs of its diverse population. This enhanced social equity and improved citizen experience in the city. In 2025, the Sustainable Heritage Ecosystem project was launched by UNESCO and the Zanzibar Government to enhance the protection of cultural heritage and the environment, fostering sustainable economic activities in Zanzibar.

Its implementation led to the launch of a Stone Town Heritage Project with fostered the revitalization of over 60 historic buildings for dual-use (residential/commercial) and improved sanitation while protecting the city's 800-year-old architectural identity.

Sustainable mobility and transport infrastructure planning and design

As Sub-Saharan Africa is undergoing rapid urban transition, the need for resilient, low-carbon, and inclusive transit systems is critical. However, implementing sustainable transport across the sub-regions faces unique structural and systemic hurdles. These include extensive urban sprawl as African cities are approximately 20% more spread out than other emerging cities, increasing the distance and cost of transport²⁴⁷.

The dominance of informal paratransit modes and huge infrastructure deficits especially for non-motorized travel.²⁴⁸

Strategic responses include the incorporation of transit oriented development into transport and city development plans. In 2023, electric vehicles became widespread as a climate mitigation strategy. Consequently, Nairobi, Kenya became a regional leader in East Africa in electric bus adoption, with start-ups like Roam and BasiGo partnering with the government to deploy e-buses²⁴⁹. In 2024, the Rwandan Government implemented tax incentives for electric vehicles and expanded "Car-Free Zones" in Kigali to promote non-motorized transport (NMT)²⁵⁰. Civil society is also playing an important role in pushing for non-motorised transport, setting up community bike hubs, such as the Langa Bicycle Hub and Khaltsha Bike Hub in Cape Town. Open Streets is an organised movement that hosts car-free days and advocates for more rights and infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists and challenges the centrality of the motor vehicle in urban planning. In 2025, Freetown, Sierra Leone implemented the "Transform Freetown" agenda²⁵¹, which uses real-time data to manage traffic and improve pedestrian safety. Similarly, Zambia and Ghana reported on the integration of "Green Corridors" - urban parks that double as cycling and walking paths to reduce the "urban heat island" effect.

247 OECD/UN ECA/AfDB (2022), Africa's Urbanisation Dynamics 2022: The Economic Power of Africa's Cities, West African Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3834ed5b-en>.

248 UN-Habitat (2022). Why Infrastructure Matters: Active Mobility, Public Transport, and Economic Growth in African Cities. December 2022. <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2023/01/why-infrastructure-matters-221216.pdf>

249 Africa Renewable Energy Manufacturing Initiative (2024). BasiGo's Journey to Electrify Public Transport in East Africa. <https://www.seforall.org/system/files/2024-05/remi-casestudy-basigo-004.pdf>

250 Rwanda Revenue Authority (2024). Government announces key tax policy reforms for 2024/2025. https://www.rra.gov.rw/en/details?tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=2166&cHash=ff3830e143baefbe9bbd0802837e4c8e

251 Freetown Development Agenda (2024). https://fcc.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/FINAL-Transform-Freetown_Transforming-Lives-Development-Agenda.pdf#:~:text=In%20Transform%20Freetown-Transforming%20Lives%2C%20we%20pledge%20to%20create,growth%2C%20building%20on%20the%20previous%20Transform%20Freetown%20agenda.

The Bus Rapid Transit operations also gained traction with the 2024 “MoVe-Yaoundé” project formal launch in Cameroon, focusing on preparing the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and the professionalisation of paratransit operators²⁵². Similarly, strategic investments in BRT and rail

systems are reducing emissions while efficiently connecting low-income workers to economic hubs in Lagos²⁵³. By 2025, the rail system in Lagos is projected to remove 35% of high-emission commercial buses from key corridors.

Box 7. Electric Buses in East Africa : The BasiGo

BasiGo, established in 2021 is a trailblazer in the African electric vehicle industry. With a workforce of 80 employees, BasiGo provides offers electric buses as a cost-effective and environmentally friendly alternative to traditional diesel buses.

BasiGo launched the first dedicated assembly line for electric buses in Kenya. This assembly line is set to produce 1,000 electric buses over the next three years, thereby creating 300 new green manufacturing jobs and generate additional 300 jobs in areas such as charging infrastructure, service and maintenance, and electric vehicle finance.

BasiGo’s deployment of 25 electric buses in Kenya and Rwanda marks a significant milestone in the region’s public transport sector. These electric buses have collectively covered over 1.6 million kilometers and transported more than 2.5 million passengers. Crucially, they have mitigated over 800 tons of CO2 emissions, leveraging East Africa’s predominantly renewable energy sources. Beyond environmental benefits, BasiGo’s electric buses have enhanced public transport in Nairobi, offering modern, affordable, and sustainable transit options for the city’s commuters.

BasiGo is rapidly expanding its local assembly capabilities for electric buses, alongside developing robust charging infrastructure and vehicle financing solutions. The company is also committed to capacity building through collaborations, such as with the Africa REMI program, to equip the workforce with the necessary skills and training for the assembly and maintenance of modern electric vehicles.

Source: Africa Renewable Energy Manufacturing Initiative (2024)²⁵⁴.

3.3. Strengthening secondary (or intermediary) cities and small towns

Metropolitan centres have received more investment than intermediate and secondary cities which are the new urban frontiers and fastest growing urban areas²⁵⁵. There is an increasing recognition that the key to sustainable, balanced

national development lies in the revitalisation and empowerment of secondary cities, intermediate cities (ICMs), and small towns across Africa²⁵⁶.

252 <https://transformative-mobility.org/regions/cameroon-move-yaounde/>

253 Federal Ministry of Works and Housing. (2022). *First Report on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Nigeria*. Page 130.

254 Africa Renewable Energy Manufacturing Initiative (2024). BasiGo’s Journey to Electrify Public Transport in East Africa. <https://www.seforall.org/system/files/2024-05/remi-casestudy-basigo-004.pdf>

255 Cities Alliance. The Role of Secondary Cities in a National System of Cities. <https://www.citiesalliance.org/themes/secondary-cities>

256 Cooper, M. & Fengler, M. (2024) Cities drive global prosperity – but the way they do that is changing. World Economic Forum. June 19, 2024. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/06/how-cities-drive-global-prosperity/>

These cities, ranging in size from between 150,000 and five million, represent one of the biggest opportunities for urbanising economies globally²⁵⁷. Despite their strategic importance, many secondary cities and small towns across African sub-regions face existential challenges. They are often characterised by poor governance, infrastructure deficits and inadequate service delivery.

A significant barrier to progress is the state of urban planning. Many secondary cities lack up-to-date or legally enforceable planning documents²⁵⁸.

Even where such frameworks exist, their implementation is frequently stifled by a lack of financial and technical resources, complex validation procedures. To counter these trends, several of the African countries have launched ambitious policies aimed at breaking urban primacy and fostering a more distributed urban settlement hierarchy.

In East Africa, the Ugandan government has gazetted 15 new cities to ensure more equitable urban resource distribution²⁵⁹. These centers are intended to serve as regional hubs for development within their respective territories. In Tanzania, national strategies now explicitly prioritise towns with populations under one million as primary drivers of growth²⁶⁰. Using the DEGURBA classification, planners are advocating for municipal status for fast-growing towns like

Kahama and Mbeya to unlock local planning powers and funding. The Arusha 2035 Plan, focuses on industrial parks and growth zones outside the city core. Through the Kenya Urban Support Program, infrastructure support is being institutionalised across 79 municipalities. Furthermore, the symbolic hosting of national holiday celebrations in secondary cities by the President highlights their growing importance.

In the Southern region, Malawi's 2022 Secondary Cities Plan²⁶¹ identifies eight new cities to act as engines for inclusive growth.

This strategy is deeply integrated with agricultural industrialisation, aiming to transform small and intermediate towns into hubs for commercial agriculture and job creation. South Africa has categorised 39 intermediate cities (ICMs) into subcategories – such as mining, manufacturing, or service centers— to provide targeted support based on their specific economic profiles²⁶².

In West Africa, Ghana uses its Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework prioritise spatial planning to curb urban sprawl, using cities like Sunyani as models for clean, well-planned urban environments²⁶³. Despite a high concentration of economic activity on the coast, Senegal is seeing the gradual emergence of secondary cities²⁶⁴. However, challenges remain significant, as less than 20% of the national territory is covered by effective urban planning

257 Cities Alliance. The Role of Secondary Cities in a National System of Cities. <https://www.citiesalliance.org/themes/secondary-cities>

258 Munro, G. (2022). Secondary cities are vital for Africa's future – and their citizens know best how to improve them. World Economic Forum. June 27, 2022. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2022/06/africa-secondary-cities-infrastructure/>

259 Uganda National Report (2025). Progress on the New Urban Agenda. August 8, 2025. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Uganda-National-Report-2025.pdf>

260 The United Republic of Tanzania Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development (2025). National Progress Report On The Implementation Of The New Urban Agenda. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Tanzania-National-Report.pdf>

261 <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Malawi-National-Report-2025.pdf>

262 <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/SA%20NUA%20REPORT%20final%2015122022-compressed.pdf>

263 Republic of Ghana (2025). Country Progress Report On The Implementation Of The New Urban Agenda In Ghana. June 2025. https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Ghana-National-Report_0.pdf

264 République du Sénégal (2025). Rapport Sur La Mise En Œuvre Du Nouvel Agenda Urbain Au Senegal. Décembre 2025. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Senegal-National-Report.pdf>

documents. In many of the sub-regions, the focus on intermediate cities is inseparable from the goal of improving living conditions in informal settlements. In Mali, the “Cities Without Slums Project” (VMSBV) has conducted topographic studies and urban profiles for over a dozen priority cities, including Kayes and Bandiagara, to eradicate spontaneous housing²⁶⁵. Similarly, Burkina Faso’s Urban Development Program (PDU)²⁶⁶ is working to enhance the functionality of secondary cities by strengthening road networks and stormwater drainage.

Overall, the transition toward strengthening small and intermediate cities represents a vital evolution in African urbanism. By moving away from a single-city focus and toward a well-connected system of cities, Africa is on the pathway to creating more resilient and equitable spatial developments. Success will eventually depend on the ability of local authorities to move beyond the preparation of master plans and into the effective, well-funded execution of infrastructure and service delivery.

265 Republique Du Mali (2025). Rapport D’évaluation À Mis-Parcours De La Mise En Œuvre Du Nouvel Agenda Urbain (2022 - 2025) Au Mali. November 2025. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Mali-National-Report-2025.pdf>

266 Ministère De L’urbanisme Et De L’habitat (2025). Rapport Sur L’état De Mise En Œuvre Du Nouveau Programme Pour Les Villes (2016-2025) Au Burkina Faso. November 11, 2025. <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Burkina-Faso-National-Report-2025.pdf>

Chapter Four: Means of implementation

4.1. Mobilisation of financial resources

Integrated financing frameworks for sustainable urban development

Across Africa, the mobilisation of financial resources for the NUA has shifted towards a systemic integration of urban goals into national fiscal architectures, primarily through Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs). As of 2022, over 40 African countries had adopted the INFF approach, with 22 actively developing or implementing specific financial strategies to support urban transformation plans, ensuring that public, private, and even international funds are pooled and optimised for urban priorities.

In West Africa, the Republic of Benin has successfully integrated its 2018–2025 National Development Plan (PND) with the NUA and Agenda 2063 through a unified financing roadmap²⁶⁷, ensuring that urban development is not an isolated sectoral expenditure but a pillar of national growth. Senegal has advanced municipal investment through the PACASEN programme, which employs performance-based grants to incentivise local execution²⁶⁸, while Burkina Faso continues to rely heavily on external partners for major investments, prompting a strategic move toward more diversified, predictable domestic

systems of revenue mobilisation to enhance fiscal autonomy²⁶⁹.

The focus of East Africa is subnational financial autonomy and direct community funding. A landmark achievement occurred in 2024 when Tanga, Tanzania, issued the first subnational water green bond in the region²⁷⁰, demonstrating the potential for cities to tap into private capital for essential infrastructure. In Malawi, the long-standing Constituency Development Fund (CDF) remains a primary vehicle for localising resources, with an increased budget allocation of K220 million per constituency for the 2025/2026 fiscal year to ensure that rural-urban linkages and small-town development are adequately funded. Complementing these innovations, cities like Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, illustrate both the potential and shortcomings of alternative financing innovations such as revenue from land leasing, which contribute substantially to infrastructure funding but are hampered by bottlenecks in administration and transparency²⁷¹.

South Africa continues to lead in the use of green finance instruments to support resilient city infrastructure²⁷², setting a precedent for the region's climate-aligned urban growth. An example is the metropolitan municipality of Tshwane, where climate-resilient planning and budgeting are being institutionalised to ensure environmental considerations are central to

267 UN-Habitat. (2022). *New Urban Agenda implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review in preparation for the second Quadrennial report*.

268 Senegal National Report

269 Burkina-Faso National Report

270 UN-Habitat. (2024). *World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action*. Page 256.

271 Muluneh, W. & Amsalu, T. (2022). Financing Urban Infrastructure through Land Leasing: Evidence from Bahir Dar City, Ethiopia. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2211.12061>

272 Republic of South Africa. (2022). *South Africa Country Report: Progress on Implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Department of Human Settlements. Page 108.

implementation²⁷³. Similarly, Lesotho is currently focusing on institutional reforms to “de-risk” its urban bodies, aiming to establish a comprehensive green banking system by 2026²⁷⁴.

Despite these varied experiences, a common trend across subregions is the significant financing gap. The African Development Bank estimates that annual urban investment range USD 130 – 170 billion, with an annual shortfall of USD 68 billion and USD 108 billion²⁷⁵, underscoring a continent-wide challenge in bridging financial demands with available domestic and external resources. Initiatives like expanding sovereign and municipal green bonds, and the mobilisation of private capital through entities such as the African Financial Alliance on Climate Change are helping to diversify financing instruments.

Expanding the potential revenue base of subnational and local governments

Across Africa, the mobilisation of financial resources has pivoted toward expanding Own-Source Revenue (OSR) to improve collection through digitised property tax systems and updated land registries to reduce dependence on volatile central government transfers²⁷⁶. The shift is critical as the Tax-to-GDP ratios across Africa rose to an average of 16.1% in 2023, reflecting a broader trend where 24 countries achieved significant increases in revenue through administrative digitalisation.

Ghana’s internally generated funds (including licences, fees and miscellaneous charges, taxes, investment income, and rates) accounted for 15.87% of total local government revenue in 2024 for its Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs)²⁷⁷, reflecting gradual progress in OSR enhancement. Meanwhile, in Burkina Faso, authorities are exploring land value capture mechanisms to convert public investment into reliable local revenue.

The shift in other countries is toward legislative standardisation and technological intervention to stabilise revenue bases. Kenya enacted the National Rating Act of 2024 to provide a uniform framework for property taxes, aiming to eliminate the inconsistencies that previously hampered local collection²⁷⁸. Despite general challenges in urban service financing in Malawi, the city of Mzuzu has successfully utilised the Revenue Mobilisation (ReMoP) to modernise its tax systems and significantly enhance its collection capacity²⁷⁹. South Africa’s constitutional fiscal arrangements give many municipalities authority over revenue collection and access to intergovernmental transfers based on predictable formulas, enhancing OSR potential and enabling better-funded urban services. Metropolitan areas in South Africa generate up to 81% of their income from own-source revenue, although rural municipalities remain significantly more dependent on transfers²⁸⁰.

273 City of Tshwane. (2024). Voluntary Local Review baseline report: A review of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. <https://ecastats.uneca.org/african-urbanization/resources/voluntary-local-review>

274 Lesotho National report

275 UN-Habitat. (2022). *New Urban Agenda implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review in preparation for the second Quadrennial report*. Page 60.

276 Government of Kenya. (2025). *Kenya National Progress Report on the New Urban Agenda (NUA)*. Page 35.

277 Ministry of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development. (2025). *Ghana National Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Page 43.

278 Government of Kenya. (2025). *Kenya National Progress Report on the New Urban Agenda (NUA)*. Page 35.

279 Ministry of Local Government, Unity and Culture. (2025). *Implementation of the New Urban Agenda: National Update Report-2025*. Page 45.

280 Republic of South Africa Country Report: 2022 Progress on Implementation of the New Urban Agenda. <https://www.sacities.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/SA-NUA-REPORT-final-15122022-compressed.pdf>

Koukamma municipality has piloted a council-approved credit control and debt collection policy to address its stagnant revenue base²⁸¹.

Box 8. Mzuzu Revenue Mobilisation

Mzuzu City Council (MCC) implemented the Revenue Mobilisation Programme (ReMoP), a strategic reform aimed at enhancing fiscal self-sufficiency through property tax reform and modernization of land administration.

ReMoP introduced measures to broaden the local tax base, including the digitization of billing and collection systems to reduce revenue leakage. Land tenure regularization in settlements such as Mchengautuwa, Chibavi, and Chibanja integrated updated land registries into the municipal rating system. These reforms produced measurable outcomes: in the 2022/23 fiscal year, MCC collected MK2.5 billion in OSR, representing 40% of total revenue. This performance contrasts with Lilongwe, which faced substantial arrears exceeding MK11 billion in the same period.

The success of ReMoP reflects a paradigm shift toward fiscal autonomy and administrative modernization, aligning with the New Urban Agenda (NUA) commitments to strengthen municipal finance and decentralization.

Despite these gains, sustainability risks remain. Challenges include potential political resistance, macroeconomic pressures affecting ratepayer affordability, and the need to maintain momentum in digital infrastructure development. Ensuring continued success requires a transparent social contract, where increased revenue collection is visibly linked to improved urban services. ReMoP demonstrates that strategic municipal reforms can significantly enhance fiscal resilience, enabling Malawian cities like Mzuzu to better serve urban populations and strengthen their capacity for sustainable, inclusive development.

Source: UN-Habitat, (2022) and Government of Malawi (2025)

Revenue mobilisation / Municipal finance

African countries are increasingly diversifying their sources of revenue and exploring innovative financing instruments to address persistent development funding gaps. Across the region, only 15.87% of local government revenue was generated from internally sourced funds in 2024, highlighting the need for stronger municipal finance systems.

Diversifying the urban economy beyond oil dependence has been a priority in Gabon with the use of special economic zones (SEZs) to attract foreign direct investments. Despite a non-

investment grade sovereign rating, there was progress in formalising land markets and reducing slum prevalence from 57.4% in 2000 to 38.8% in 2022, providing a foundation for property taxation and land-value capture to support resilient urban infrastructure. Also, Mozambique has expanded and strengthened subnational revenue through targeted administrative modernisation and land use reforms. The PROMAPUTO project for revenue collection has served as a catalyst for OSR growth in the country for decades, but another approach adopted by the government is the registration and legalisation of land use rights (DUAT) programme with the strategic aim of issuing 5 million land titles by 2024.

281 Koukamma Local Municipality. (2024). Voluntary Local Review: Koukamma Local Municipality. <https://ecastats.uneca.org/african-urbanization/resources/voluntary-local-review>

Although the programme was under restructuring in early 2024 to reflect operational realities²⁸², but it provides a cadastral foundation for property taxation and enables performance-based grants to incentivise municipal financial management. In Madagascar, the National Emerging Decentralisation Plan (PNDE) sets an ambitious target of transferring 15% to 20% of the national budget to local authorities by 2030²⁸³.

Other countries have adopted digital transformation to strengthen municipal finance systems. In Rwanda, land administration reforms have been integrated with digital efficiency with the use of the Land Administration Information System and One-Stop Centres to formalise property markets and boost OSR. Inclusive growth in the country averaging at 8% since 2000, is being supported by targeted tax reforms that expand the tax base, reduce dependency on external transfers, and enhance fiscal transparency, with digital tools facilitating urban market formalisation and land-value capture. Mauritius has also demonstrated an advanced approach to expanding the potential revenue base through a national digital roadmap leveraging blockchain and AI, coupled with multi-level governance through the SDG Steering Committee, enhancing revenue mobilisation, fiscal transparency, and the potential for green and blue bond issuance. Eswatini's municipalities are transitioning to automated e-payment gateways for property rates and utility billing via mobile money while the implementation of the Local Authorities Digital System (LADS) in Mutare,

Zimbabwe, improved revenue collection efficiency from 33% in 2019 to approximately 67% by 2023²⁸⁴.

4.2. Capacity development

Strengthening of the capacity of national, subnational and local governments, including local government associations

Evidence across Africa consistently highlights that capacity development is foundational to implementing the NUA, focusing on strengthening human resources, technical systems, public financial management, and institutional accountability at national and subnational levels.

In many countries, notable focus has been on expanding technical and governance capacity through structured training and legislative strengthening. For example, over 1,200 regional and municipal planners, councillors and technical officers were trained between 2022-2026 in GIS, participatory planning and fiscal management in Tanzania²⁸⁵. Malawi prioritises capacity development through multi-stakeholder training workshops for newly elected members of parliament (MPs) and ward councillors in participatory planning²⁸⁶. Capacity development has also centred on professional training, data systems, and participatory planning as reports from Ghana describe programmes where physical planners in selected districts assemblies have been trained in geographic information systems (GIS)²⁸⁷.

282 World Bank (2023). Restructuring Paper on a Proposed Project Restructuring of Mozambique Land Administration Project (Terra Segura) Approved on December 4, 2018, to Ministry of Economy and Finance (Report No: P164551). <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099051723085522189/pdf/P1645510010cd90ab0884107ef3f1eb9e60.pdf>

283 Madagascar National Report

284 City of Mutare. (2024). Voluntary Local Review: City of Mutare. Government of Zimbabwe Ministry of Local Government and Public Works. <https://ecastats.uneca.org/african-urbanization/resources/voluntary-local-review>

285 Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development. (2025). *Tanzania New Urban Agenda (NUA) Second Implementation Report, 2025*. Page 129.

286 Ministry of Local Government, Unity and Culture. (2025). *Implementation of the New Urban Agenda: National Update Report-2025*. Page 81.

287 Ministry of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development. (2025). *Ghana National Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Page 57.

Ghana's emphasis on GIS training is complemented by broader efforts to build capacities in municipal administrative functions

The city of Abomey-Calavi, Benin provides training to the staff of the municipality on the optimisation of fiscal and tariff receipts to improve mobilization of own resources²⁸⁸. This technical upskilling is mirrored in Southern Africa, where the South African national government invests an annual amount of over 2 billion rand for local government capacity building. Furthermore, some metropolitan municipalities in South Africa are strengthening capacity through international twinning agreements and specialised training. For instance, Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality engages in extensive partnerships with cities like Gävle (Sweden) and Leiden (Netherlands) to exchange expertise in spatial planning, GIS, and good governance²⁸⁹, while others rely on partnerships within the country, like Tshwane's collaboration with national departments to train its staff in water and sanitation occupational qualifications²⁹⁰.

Gaps in capacity development

Human, technical, and financial capacity gaps remain a constraint, particularly in small cities and secondary cities. In West Africa, critical human resource deficits and technical obsolescence is pronounced. Nigeria faces a severe shortage of professional expertise, with only 4,693 qualified town planner. There are approximately 0.41 planners per 100,000 people²⁹¹.

This shortage is mirrored in Burkina Faso, where municipalities lack qualified personnel and modern planning tools and adequate financial resources²⁹². These gaps are compounded by uneven decentralisation and fiscal dependency, which weaken institutional autonomy and make sustained technical training difficult. In smaller municipalities across the West African subregion, the shortage of professional planners and weak monitoring systems significantly restrict evidence-based planning and compliance with NUA commitments.

While countries like Tanzania and Kenya have initiated various training programmes, the persistence of limited capacity for data collection and management across the East sub-region restricts evidence-based policymaking and prevents effective tracking of urban development commitments. Furthermore, implementation is often stalled by institutional fragmentation and the absence of overarching policy in some countries. Botswana reports that planning, monitoring, and evaluation skills are not integrated across different levels of government, while lack of a comprehensive institutional framework and national urban policy in Lesotho hinders implementation due to limited integrated skills across planning, monitoring, and evaluation²⁹³ monitoring systems, restricting evidence-based policymaking and effective tracking of urban development commitments. Mogale City in South Africa also notes that a lack of absolute autonomy

288 Municipality of Abomey-Calavi. (2023). Voluntary Local Review: Abomey-Calavi Municipality report 2022 (S. Ould-Dada, Ed.). Ministry of Development and Coordination of Government Action, Republic of Benin. <https://ecastats.uneca.org/african-urbanization/resources/voluntary-local-review>

289 Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality. (2024). *Voluntary Local Review (VLR) report 2024: A review on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*. <https://ecastats.uneca.org/african-urbanization/resources/voluntary-local-review>

290 City of Tshwane. (2024). Voluntary Local Review baseline report: A review of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. <https://ecastats.uneca.org/african-urbanization/resources/voluntary-local-review>

291 Federal Ministry of Works and Housing. (2022). *First Report on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Nigeria*. Page 150.

292 Ministère de l'Urbanisme et de l'Habitat. (2025). *Burkina Faso National Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Page 16.

293 Ministry of Local Government, Chieftainship, Home Affairs and Police. (2026). *The Lesotho National Report on the New Urban Agenda*. Page 26.

for local government often leads to lack of resources and knowledge required to achieve specific objectives²⁹⁴.

4.3. Information technology and innovation

Information and communications technology policies and e-government strategies

The use of e-governance platforms to improve service delivery, revenue collection, accountability, and transparency is increasing. In Ghana, e-governance reforms include the MyAssembly App, which strengthens citizen engagement with Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies and supports transparency in local administration, complementing broader digitisation of land and revenue systems²⁹⁵. Nigeria is utilising emerging smart city frameworks to improve banking, retail systems, transport coordination and e-payments, linking urban innovation with financial inclusion and revenue mobilisation²⁹⁶. In Senegal, the Smart Sénégal programme promotes urban security technologies, digital education platforms, and broadband expansion to modernise²⁹⁷, while Togo successfully leveraged its digital infrastructure to provide critical social protection payments to 600,000 urban residents during the COVID-19 pandemic, showcasing the resilience of digital safety nets.

Rwanda places ICT and artificial intelligence at the centre of its urban transformation agenda, integrating telemedicine consultations into health systems to expand access and resilience and embedding the Land Administration Information

System within the Kigali City Master Plan to modernise land management and planning transparency in Kigali. Botswana has prioritised a “government-online” initiative aiming to digitize all public services by 2026 to ensure equitable access and reduce administrative bottlenecks, reflecting a whole-of-government approach to e-administration that supports transparency and efficiency across sector. Mauritius leveraging blockchain and artificial intelligence to modernise public services and strengthen administrative accountability, positioning digital innovation as part of a broader economic diversification strategy under its Digital Transformation Blueprint (2025-2029).

Collectively, this shows that while digital divides and infrastructure costs remain persistent challenges in Africa, the adoption of e-government is transforming how cities collect revenue, protect vulnerable populations, and manage urban growth.

Innovative mechanisms for sharing and exchanging information, knowledge and expertise

Across Africa, the mobilisation of innovative mechanisms for sharing and exchanging information has helped to bridge the gap between national policy and municipal execution. Innovative information-sharing mechanisms in West Africa are emerging through digital observatories and integrated development platforms. In Ghana, an urban observatory is integrated into the District Development Platform (DDDP) support the tracking of urban policy implementation at the local authority level, thereby enhancing data sharing between national

294 Mogale City Local Municipality. (2024). *Voluntary Local Review: Mogale City*. <https://ecastats.uneca.org/african-urbanization/resources/voluntary-local-review>

295 Ministry of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development. (2025). *Ghana National Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Page 45.

296 Federal Ministry of Works and Housing. (2022). *First Report on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Nigeria*. Page 39.

297 Ministère de l'Urbanisme et de l'Habitat. (2025). *Rapport du Sénégal sur la mise en œuvre du NAU*. Page 87.

and subnational governments²⁹⁸. This focus on collaborative monitoring is mirrored in East Africa, where Tanzania has operationalised the e-Ardhi electronic land system, which supports digitised land registration to reduce disputes and improve land-use monitoring through a transparent knowledge-sharing interface²⁹⁹. Furthermore, Kenya has expanded its digital infrastructure by establishing 247 Digital Hubs to provide free internet access for online employment and revenue generation³⁰⁰, while Uganda has centralised service delivery and information exchange through the operationalisation of One-Stop Centres across its major cities³⁰¹.

Furthermore, South Africa has leveraged sophisticated digital dashboards to track city development progress against key indicators. In a unique display of inclusive knowledge-sharing, the city of Johannesburg utilised Minecraft to allow local stakeholders and residents to co-design inner-city parks, effectively using gamification as an innovative tool for urban planning collaboration. Meanwhile, Mutare, Zimbabwe, continues to utilise social media and WhatsApp chatbots to move from citizens being mere recipients to being active co-creators in municipal governance

Collectively, these initiatives suggest that while technological adoption is expanding across Africa, the depth of institutional integration and equitable access to digital knowledge systems varies significantly, shaping the pace at which

innovation translates into inclusive and evidence-based urban governance.³⁰².

Disruptive and/or enabling technologies and Artificial intelligence

Across Africa, the adoption of disruptive and enabling technologies is shifting from basic digitization toward the strategic deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and deep learning to address complex urban management, climate resilience challenges, policies, and societal trends on the continent³⁰³. Durban, South Africa has applied deep learning software to accelerate spatial recognition of informal settlements using aerial imagery, improving planning precision, land-use monitoring and responsiveness in rapidly changing urban areas. South Africa more broadly reports growing application of digital dashboards and predictive analytics to enhance infrastructure management and climate adaptation planning, and Johannesburg is exploring drones, robotics, and machine learning in its call centres for faster query resolution and more efficient engineering operations³⁰⁴. Mutare's LADS system utilises big data and AI analytics to enhance decision-making and accurately model tariffs³⁰⁵.

The transition towards AI-driven governance is increasing in East Africa, where Kenya has introduced an AI-powered budget platform in Machakos County using data analytics to simplify budget information and facilitate participatory

298 Ministry of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development. (2025). *Ghana National Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Page 4.

299 Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development. (2025). *Tanzania New Urban Agenda (NUA) Second Implementation Report, 2025*. Page 130.

300 Government of Kenya. (2025). *Kenya National Progress Report on the New Urban Agenda (NUA)*. Page 30.

301 Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development. (2025). *Uganda National Report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Page 41.

302 City of Mutare. (2024). Voluntary Local Review: City of Mutare. Government of Zimbabwe Ministry of Local Government and Public Works. <https://ecastats.uneca.org/african-urbanization/resources/voluntary-local-review>

303 UN-Habitat. (2024). *World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action*. Page 104.

304 City of Johannesburg. (2024). Joburg Voluntary Local Review 2023/24. <https://ecastats.uneca.org/african-urbanization/resources/voluntary-local-review>

305 City of Mutare. (2024). Voluntary Local Review: City of Mutare. Government of Zimbabwe Ministry of Local Government and Public Works. <https://ecastats.uneca.org/african-urbanization/resources/voluntary-local-review>

oversight³⁰⁶. Across the continent, AI and enabling technologies are increasingly framed as tools to improve urban resilience, transparency and participatory governance, particularly in climate monitoring, land administration, fiscal management and service optimisation. However, national reports emphasise shared challenges including digital divides between metropolitan

and intermediary cities, insufficient AI governance frameworks, data privacy and cybersecurity risks, limited technical expertise, and the disruptive impacts of global platform economies on local markets. For example, apps such as Airbnb and Uber pose a threat to the local real estate sector and transport enterprises in many cities.

Box 9. Durban deep learning structures

To modernise spatial planning, Durban partnered with UNITAC Hamburg to deploy an AI-powered deep learning system that analyses high-resolution aerial imagery to identify informal settlements and individual structures. Implemented during the 2022–2025 period, this technology replaces resource-intensive manual mapping, enabling faster, more granular, and scalable monitoring of urban expansion.

The AI system has transformed urban planning by providing real-time visibility into settlement growth, allowing precise targeting of infrastructure investments and retrofitting of services to withstand climate-related shocks, such as flooding, which disproportionately impact unplanned areas. These data-driven approaches support inclusive and climate-resilient urban development.

However, institutionalisation remains a work in progress. The benefits of AI are currently skewed toward high-capacity metropolitan areas, and sustaining gains requires addressing digital inequality and establishing robust ethical frameworks for data governance to protect the privacy and rights of vulnerable populations.

Overall, Durban's experience illustrates how technology-driven urban management can improve planning precision, service delivery, and climate resilience, while highlighting the need for equitable and ethically governed implementation to ensure benefits reach all urban residents.

Source: UN-Habitat (2024)

Interventions/approaches/strategies to strengthen data and statistical capacities at national, subnational, and local levels.

Africa is strengthening urban data through the African Union's Data Policy Framework (2022) and Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), digitising land registries, and utilising geospatial data to monitor New Urban Agenda progress across municipal levels. National statistical agencies, such as Stats SA in South Africa, provides comprehensive demographic, socioeconomic and spatial datasets across government spheres, enabling

coordinated planning, intergovernmental fiscal monitoring and evaluation of urban performance indicators³⁰⁷. Specifically, Cape Town continues to use its Comprehensive Knowledge Archive Network (CKAN) as a data strategy to treat data as a public asset, making it transparent and accessible across all functions³⁰⁸.

306 Government of Kenya. (2025). *Kenya National Progress Report on the New Urban Agenda (NUA)*. Page 39.

307 Republic of South Africa. (2022). *South Africa Country Report: Progress on Implementation of the New Urban Agenda*. Page 116.

308 City of Cape Town. (2021). *Voluntary Local Review 2021 City of Cape Town: A review of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals*. <https://ecastats.uneca.org/african-urbanization/resources/voluntary-local-review>

Digital dashboards at the metropolitan level enhance transparency and allow tracking of infrastructure delivery and service provision outcomes, for example, Tshwane is leveraging an enterprise data architecture policy Policy to develop SAP-based dashboards that track administrative data centrally³⁰⁹.

Mwanza stakeholders have called for the National Bureau of Statistics to create a specialised SDG database to provide granular information needed for local tracking³¹⁰. Madagascar is currently modernising its land registry by digitising archives to improve cadastral management and resolve data inconsistencies.

Furthermore, the deployment of urban GIS platforms in Cameroon to support spatial planning and environmental monitoring, signalling a move toward digitised urban management tools. Interventions in the West Africa region includes the proposed African Urban Data Commons in Burkina-Faso to harmonise urban indicators across the continent and reduce the fragmentation that often hinders comparative analysis.

The regional implementation reports collectively emphasize that the adoption of innovative data sources, including satellite imagery, AI-enabled analytics, and citizen-generated data, is fundamentally expanding the quality of urban datasets³¹¹.

309 City of Tshwane. (2024). Voluntary Local Review baseline report: A review of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. <https://ecastats.uneca.org/african-urbanization/resources/voluntary-local-review>

310 Mwanza City Council. (2024). Voluntary Local Review: City of Mwanza. A review of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. UN-Habitat. <https://ecastats.uneca.org/african-urbanization/resources/voluntary-local-review>

311 UN-Habitat. (2022). *New Urban Agenda implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review in preparation for the second Quadrennial report*. Page 72.

Chapter Five: Conclusion (Next steps)

5.1 Harnessing the catalytic role of cities for sustainable urban development in Africa

The reporting period (2022-2026) demonstrates that African cities are increasingly recognised as the primary engines of national prosperity, generating significant portions of national GDP and serving as the frontline for implementing the New Urban Agenda. To fully harness this potential, the following strategic priority actions are identified to ensure urbanisation drives sustained, inclusive, and sustainable growth across the continent.

- Prioritise medium and small cities as strategic intervention points: Intermediate and secondary cities are at the forefront of Africa's urban transition and must be supported as regional hubs to alleviate pressure on primary metropolises.
- Strengthen multi-level and multi-stakeholder partnerships: Effective urban development relies on collaborative governance integrating national, sub-national, and local government efforts alongside the private sector, civil society, and academia. Member State reports highlight the importance of robust "social capital" through urban sector working groups that include the private sector, civil society, and academia to ensure evidence-based solutions and ease resource mobilisation.
- Scale targeted investments with multiple co-benefits: Strategic investments in affordable housing, basic infrastructure, and climate-resilient systems can generate social, economic, and environmental returns.
- Leveraging Digital Transformation and Innovation: Smart-city approaches and digital tools are pivotal for modern urban management. Member States emphasise the need to bridge the digital divide by extending infrastructure to underserved informal settlements, ensuring that technological innovation promotes shared prosperity rather than widening inequalities.

5.2. Concluding remarks

Lessons learned to sustain progress achieved and next steps for action

The following are critical lessons that emerged from African nations' efforts in implementing the NUA to sustain and guide future actions:

- African urbanisation is rapid but uneven: The pace of urban growth across the continent continues to accelerate, yet it is plagued by territorial and socio-economic disparities. Therefore, sustaining progress requires context-specific and differentiated strategies to address the varied dynamics and realities of countries, regions, and cities.

- City size strongly shapes risk, governance, and opportunity: The challenges and opportunities faced by large metropolitan areas significantly differ from those in medium and small cities, underscoring the need for tailored policy instruments and investment approaches.
- Slums and informality are structural, not temporary failures: Informal settlements and economies are deeply embedded in urban systems, and they reflect structural gaps in housing, planning, land tenure systems, and employment. Sustainable progress in Africa depends on inclusive policies that integrate and support informal communities and livelihoods rather than treating them as temporary or transitional phenomena.
- Climate risks are now urban risks: The level of exposure to climate change impacts are concentrated in cities. Urban planning and service delivery initiatives must systematically integrate climate adaptation and mitigation to safeguard development gains and build long-term resilience.
- One-size-fits-all solutions do not work: Reiteratively, the urban landscape in Africa is diverse in scale, capacity, and context. To ensure effectiveness and sustainability, there is a need for policies and programmes to be flexible, locally grounded, and informed by data and community engagement.

Key thematic area

Furthermore, the thematic synthesis of the key cross-cutting lessons across the West, Central, East and Southern sub-regions of Africa is presented as follows:

Governance and Planning

- **West Africa:** There is improvement in coordination across stakeholders, but it remains uneven. A strong economic growth focus with transitioning toward PPPs is essential for managing the scale of infrastructure and housing needs in cities. In some cases, territorialisation is important, and progress is sustained by moving from isolated projects to “territory poles” that balance national growth. Decentralisation reforms exist but are often under-resourced and rapid urban expansion challenges planning enforcement.
- **Central Africa:** Effective multi-agency coordination is hindered by overlapping mandates and complex systems. Moving beyond “coping with scale” towards structured and proactive legal frameworks is critical for stabilising growth. Decentralisation and focus on secondary cities are necessary to alleviate pressure on overstretched primary capitals.
- **East Africa:** Metropolitan-scale planning is essential for fast-growing hubs. Political support must be secured before planning starts to ensure project continuity, and local governments need greater authority for policy implementation.
- **Southern Africa:** Implementation across governance structure remains uneven, and spatial inequalities persist. Horizontal coordination between ministries is vital to avoid duplication of efforts. Dedicated professional teams are needed to lead the “Enabling Environment.”

Data and Digitalisation

- **West Africa:** Insufficient disaggregated urban data remains a primary barrier to evidence-based planning. ICT and e-governance initiatives are emerging as viable tools to sustain transparency and citizen feedback, but it is unevenly adopted and integrated.
- **Central Africa:** Data gaps remain a structural constraint, and digitalisation is advancing unevenly. However, local data ownership improves accountability in municipalities.
- **East Africa:** There is a need for data capability and digital land systems have been recognised as the most effective tools for reducing corruption and increasing land tenure security.
- **Southern Africa:** Centralised national data systems are mandated to share data across siloed agencies. Also, disaggregated data is needed to track progress for vulnerable groups.

Financing and Resource Use

- **West Africa:** Urban finance is a bottleneck for housing and infrastructure development with heavy reliance on national transfers. Fiscal decentralisation and absolute control over Internally Generated Funds (IGF) empower local authorities to decide priorities and anti-corruption measures significantly saves revenue for urban projects.
- **Central Africa:** Severely constrained municipal fiscal space and widening backlogs in public investment of infrastructure. Improved budgeting practices and expenditure tracking has potential for better resource utilisation.
- **East Africa:** Subnational finance and resource mobilisation are somewhat weak. Digital revenue collection prevents leakages and enhances own-source revenue (OSR) portfolios. PPPs are necessary to fund capital-intensive infrastructure.
- **Southern Africa:** Municipal finance systems are strong priority reform areas, as diversification of income beyond property rates, including blended finance and pension fund collaboration, is required for sustainability.

Resilience and Social Equity

- **West Africa:** Slum upgrading and urban expansion planning must be proactive, as regularising land rights is more effective than reactive infrastructure. Integrated management and preventative responses are needed for coastal and flood-prone zones. Inclusive participation improved, but it is still top-down in many areas. Therefore, Citizen participation must move to bottom-up forums.
- **Central Africa:** Post-disaster recovery approaches are less effective than preventative land-use and risk-sensitive planning. Displacement and migration pressures require territorial approaches. Planning processes reference inclusivity, but operationalisation remains limited. Community engagement improves project sustainability and participatory mapping, and local enumeration improve visibility of vulnerable populations.
- **East Africa:** Mass transit (BRT) and non-motorized transport (NMT) are critical for sustainable, equitable mobility. Affirmative action (e.g., selling housing units to women) ensures social inclusion.

Although stakeholder engagement mechanisms exist, particularly in community-led mapping, there is still a need to strengthen their approaches to strengthen operationalisation of inclusive considerations in policy initiatives.

- Southern Africa: “Early Warning for All” systems are vital for survival in climate-vulnerable regions. Also, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) must be co-created with communities to resonate with local needs. More community engagement is required for inclusive urban planning.

Lessons for multi-stakeholders

Effective urban transformation in Africa depends on coordinated action across governments, communities, the private sector, and knowledge partners. Lessons from 2022–2025 show that inclusive governance, equitable service delivery, and innovation are key to advancing the New Urban Agenda and SDGs. The lessons and priority actions for governments, communities, private sector actors, and knowledge organisations to accelerate progress toward the NUA and SDGs implementation are discussed below, and the accompanying table summarises the core lessons and actionable steps for each stakeholder group

National Governments

The core lessons for national governments are the need for policy coherence and multi-level coordination to ensure effective urban transformation. It has also been recognised that strong institutions and accountability systems are prerequisites for accelerated NUA and SDG delivery, while urban innovation must align with national climate and development commitments. To translate these lessons into action, governments should strengthen coordination across ministries and agencies responsible for urban planning, decentralise and enhance municipal finance, reinforce institutional capacities, implement urban planning guidelines that protect public spaces, and align urban policies with climate commitments while scaling successful city-level initiatives.

Subnational and Local Governments

They play a central role as implementers of resilience and climate action. Experience has shown that inclusive, coordinated governance enhances effectiveness and legitimacy, and demonstration projects can catalyse broader transformation. Moving forward, local authorities should support community-led climate adaptation and resilience initiatives, identify and implement catalytic public space interventions, transition from top-down approaches to collaborative governance, broaden innovation ecosystems, and establish frameworks that enable effective NUA implementation at the city level.

Communities, including vulnerable groups

They have demonstrated that resilience is most effective when co-designed with those directly affected, and that secure tenure and protection of livelihoods are fundamental to inclusive urbanisation. Additionally, community stewardship strengthens the sustainability of public spaces and urban interventions. Priority actions include participating as equal partners in planning and implementing climate and resilience initiatives, engaging in negotiated processes to define locally appropriate solutions, contributing to the design and maintenance of public spaces, promoting women- and youth-led innovations, and advocating for secure tenure and the recognition of informal livelihoods.

Private sector actors

They have shown that sustainable urbanisation requires responsible investment, innovation, and collaboration with public authorities. Public-private partnerships enhance implementation capacity, while business practices should align with NUA and SDGs principles. Going forward, the private sector should actively engage in participatory governance, support inclusive public space development and climate-resilient infrastructure, contribute technical expertise to innovation platforms, align operations with sustainability targets, invest in secondary cities, and provide financing mechanisms that strengthen local capacities.

Knowledge institutions and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

They have highlighted the importance of evidence-based policymaking for effective urban outcomes and the value of integrating grassroots and scientific knowledge. Accountability mechanisms are crucial to ensure inclusive governance. These stakeholders should establish multi-stakeholder platforms linking academia, policymakers, practitioners, and communities, translate research into actionable urban policy, integrate local knowledge with scientific research in adaptation planning, support innovation partnerships and capacity development, and hold governments accountable while contributing constructively to policy learning.

The experiences of African cities highlight that achieving the commitments of the New Urban Agenda requires coordinated and inclusive action across all stakeholders. The insights presented for national, sub-national, and local governments, communities, the private sector, and knowledge partners emphasise that progress in urban social inclusion, service delivery, environmental resilience and sustainable prosperity depends on collaborative implementation, strategic partnerships, and evidence-based interventions. Moving forward, these lessons should guide practical action to ensure that urban transformation is equitable, resilient, and aligned with the overarching goals of the NUA and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Lessons for multi-stakeholders		
Stakeholders	Core Lessons	Priority Actions
National Governments	- Policy coherence and multi-level coordination are essential for effective urban transformation. - Strong institutions and accountability systems are prerequisites for accelerated NUA and SDGs delivery. - Urban innovation must align with national climate and development commitments.	- Strengthen horizontal and vertical coordination across ministries and agencies responsible for urban planning and public space management. - Decentralise and strengthen municipal finance - Reinforce national and subnational institutional capacities and accountability frameworks. - Develop and implement urban planning and design guidelines that secure land for public space networks and prevent encroachment. - Align urban policy and innovation with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and scale up successful city-level climate actions. - Recommit to sustained and transformative action toward achieving the SDGs and NUA
Subnational /Local Governments	- Cities are critical implementers of resilience and climate action. - Inclusive and coordinated governance enhances effectiveness and legitimacy. - Demonstration projects can catalyse broader transformation.	- Support locally led climate adaptation and resilience-building initiatives. - Identify and implement “quick wins” and catalytic public space interventions. - Transition from top-down approaches to collaborative and coordinating governance models. - Broaden innovation ecosystems and promote knowledge exchange across stakeholders. - Establish enabling frameworks for effective NUA implementation at the city level.
Communities (Including Vulnerable Groups)	- Resilience is most effective when co-designed with affected populations. - Secure tenure and livelihood protection are foundational to inclusive urbanisation. - Community stewardship enhances the sustainability of public spaces.	- Participate as equal partners in planning and implementing urban climate action. - Leverage collective organisation to improve agency - Engage in negotiated resilience processes to define locally appropriate solutions. - Contribute to the design, maintenance, and management of public spaces. - Prioritise inclusion of women-led and youth-led innovations. Advocate for secure tenure and the decriminalisation of informal livelihoods.
Private Sector Actors	- Sustainable urbanisation requires responsible private investment and innovation. - Public-private collaboration strengthens implementation capacity. - Business practices should align with NUA and SDGs principles.	- Engage as collaborators in participatory urban governance processes. - Comply with and support frameworks guiding inclusive public space development and climate-resilient infrastructure. - Contribute technical expertise to socially valuable innovation platforms. - Align supply chains and operations with sustainability targets. - Support financing mechanisms for local capacity building and project implementation. - Partner with municipalities and invest in secondary cities.

**Knowledge
Organisations
& Civil Society
Organisations
(CSOs)**

- Evidence-based policymaking strengthens urban outcomes.
 - Combining grassroots and scientific knowledge improves adaptation and planning.
 - Accountability mechanisms are essential for inclusive governance.
- Establish multi-stakeholder platforms linking academia, policymakers, practitioners, and communities.
 - Translate research into actionable guidelines for urban policy implementation.
 - Integrate local knowledge systems with scientific research in adaptation planning.
 - Promote evidence-based innovation.
 - Support innovation partnerships and sustained capacity development.
 - Hold governments accountable while contributing constructively to policy learning.

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