



UN Major Group for
Children and Youth
the space for children and youth in the United Nations

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



Ministry of Devolution
and Planning

NATIONAL URBAN YOUTH FORUM

**YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE FOREFRONT OF SHAPING
KENYA'S URBAN FUTURE**

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

8TH AND 9TH FEBRUARY 2016

NAIROBI YOUTH DECLARATION ON SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

To achieve Sustainable Development Goals in an urbanizing world means investing adequately in urban development and infrastructure. Young people globally make up to half the world's population. In Kenya, young people make up to 78% of the Kenyan population. Therefore this makes young people key role players in the urban sustainable development. According to the Kenyan Youth Survey that was conducted in 2015, 55% of youth are unemployed, with females bearing the brunt at 62% worse among rural women at 68%. Contrastingly, the majority of those with university education are employed, just one out five graduates is not engaged productively, an indication that university graduates are not any better in terms of job placements. Although the government in the past has created good programs, the envisaged results are far from being achieved.

There is need for young people to participate in decision-making process as reflected in the post 2015 Development Agenda; additionally, this makes young people an important stakeholder in policy making and implementation. It is on this basis that the Habitat III working group of the UN Major Group for Children and Youth, together with various partners, organized a two-day event at the University of Nairobi with the theme of “**Young people in the forefront of shaping Kenya's Urban Future**”. This national forum brought together young people from the different counties in Kenya and some from other countries in the Eastern African region. The outcome document; **The Nairobi Youth Declaration on Sustainable Urban Development**, highlights challenges of urban development in the context of young people and gives key areas of recommendations to be considered by various stakeholders in the New Urban Agenda.

It also highlights the priorities and key recommendations as voiced by the young people who were in attendance.

THE CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Today's youth face very many challenges arising from social ills which are propelled by the high rate of unemployment, lack of inclusivity in most projects, limited public participation and corruption which has greatly impacted the lives of most young people negatively.

We call upon the government and the different stakeholders to come out and assist in making sure that these issues are addressed progressively. Initiatives such as construction of youth development centers will help reduce the rate of unemployment. There is need for educating the young people on ways to access funds that can help them start their own businesses and other income generating activities. This is not enough, as the banks need to lower their rates so that young people can access loans to encourage self-employment. Young people need to work in collaboration to access these funds. The idea of the age bracket limitation should be lowered to accommodate more young people to access the funds.

We call for young peoples' empowerment through establishment of youth empowerment initiatives, especially in informal settlements, that will ensure *resource allocation* has been redistributed fairly and equally among all the youths.

We note the importance of collaboration between different stakeholders including the government to ensure that young people's needs are properly addressed in order to reduce social vices such as the issue of radicalization, which has risen due to the high rates of unemployment.

Drug and substance abuse, has rendered most young people to be hopeless and jobless especially those who reside in the urban areas (hence the cropping up of shanties at the backyard of these urban areas). For the various stakeholders who already have existing initiatives, we acknowledge their efforts and steps in ensuring that the mitigation of the effects of these issues has been addressed. We therefore, call for other methods of curbing the drug menace as the suppliers of the substances have also improved their ways to ensure their "businesses" thrive.

The government has tried to strengthen the National Youth Leadership Strategy but we recognize that more has to be done. These strategies have to be inclusive of all young people in Kenya and strengthen the ways used to reach out to the young people in the marginalized areas to ensure that their areas have reached the urban levels.

Corruption has made many young people to miss out on important opportunities that they deserve. It has gone to the extent of people now terming corruption and tribalism as a *cancerous diseases* that are slowly eating up the society and leads to young people missing out on job positions or even scholarships that would have helped them ensure the growth of urban areas. Corruption can only be eradicated if the different agencies mandated with fighting the vice seals all loopholes that lead to occurrence of corruption deals. Social transformation and mindset change is also needed in order to root out the notion of corruption being a socially acceptable "tradition".

Additionally, there has been inadequate partnership between the National government and the county governments; we therefore urge both governments to collaborate in ensuring transparency towards the issues that affect the youth of this country. We call upon them to look at public participation and involve the youth in making decisions and ensuring even the minority interest groups have not been left out in decision-making processes.

Urban Management

As much as there are many plans of setting up urban areas, the wider community does not understand some of these plans and the contemporary urban planning institutions do not reflect on local conditions. We therefore urge the respective stakeholders to look at ways to offer support to young people such as civic education, which will strengthen the decisions made by the different stakeholders who come up with policies.

The urban population has risen from 8.3% to 44.5% in 2015. In 2030 most of the Kenyan population will be living in urban areas according to the World Bank report which estimates the growth to be 4.31%. Our country report towards Habitat III is that most Kenyans below 30 constitute 75% of the population yet they do not have access to basic amenities and housing. We call upon the government to consult with the counties to draw a plan that will ensure that the youth get access to the basic social amenities.

Local actors in the sustainability of our cities

We call on urban development stakeholders including the government to get to the grassroots level to engage young people in identifying their needs in urban development.

Young people are talented, energetic, and ready to be engaged for a development course. We therefore call for all kind of support including financial support, skill development and knowledge sharing that will enable efficient and effective implementation of urban youth initiatives.

Young people are often affected by the urban policies and plans constituted by the stakeholders. We hence call for proper youth engagement in policy formulation and the implementation of plans and national urban development programs.

Young people are ready to engage as equal partners in the urban development agenda at their community levels to enhance the sustainability of Urban Areas. We call upon all stakeholders to offer young people a conducive environment of interaction and engagement at the community level.

In order to achieve sustainable urban development, young people need skills to develop more innovative urban solutions. We therefore call upon all learning and non-learning Institutions to implement skill enhancement courses and strategies that will help young people to be more innovative and to create jobs.

There is need for knowledge sharing amongst young people living in urban areas and the rural areas. We call for provision of channels and platforms for rural-urban youth dialogues, skills, and knowledge transfer.

Young people recognize the important role played by industries in the economic growth of our cities. We hence call for the decentralization of industries and services into the smaller cities and towns to prevent the large number of young people moving to the major cities. (Rural-Urban Migration)

Availability and access to food in the urban areas is one of the key characteristics of sustainable cities. We call for strategies, support, and platforms that encourage more young people to be involved in urban farming. This will ensure that young people contribute to urban food security and dietary needs of the urban population.

We recognize that our transport systems are not sustainable and therefore call for the transport industry to be fully transformed into practicing environmentally sound measures to reduce carbon emissions, traffic congestion and waste dumping. We also call for proper road network that enable sustainable transport and youth friendly systems such as cycling, skating and jogging tracks.

How young people contribute to sustainable urban development

For the achievement of sustainable development, young people acknowledge that they constitute the largest segment of the population hence; they are willing to spearhead creation of awareness in their communities, engage in community empowerment and capacity building within their communities.

The youth commit to taking part in the process of policy formulation to contribute their ideas and to bring to light issues that affect them with the ultimate aim of coming up with policies that include youth concerns. Other than policy formation, they are willing to participate in the planning of urban facilities to assist in the development of community-centered and inclusive public utilities.

The youth also take up the watchdog role by carrying out monitoring and evaluation of services in urban centers and provide feedback for follow up with the government. They also take up personal leadership and volunteering for public benefit.

One of the issues that are constant in urban development is food security. To realize food security in urban development, the youth realize the need to be engaged in urban agriculture as an alternative source of food.

The youth acknowledge that technology and innovation is necessary for sustainable urban development. We commit to utilizing incubation centers and assist in software development to offer solutions in real estate development and transport industry.

Resource efficiency and waste management is critical in urban settlements, therefore, young people commit to take part in water harvesting, recycling of waste and proper waste disposal.

Young people commit to supporting government projects and find alternative means of airing grievances instead of destructive tendencies. They are ready to shun/ fight corruption and engage in behavior change to support sustainable development.

The youth call upon all stakeholders to develop private/public partnership, which will assist in sharing of resources and knowledge between established and emerging urban centers. They also demand for proper inclusion in social forums.

Support needed to ensure meaningful contribution of young people in urban development

To ensure meaningful contribution towards sustainable urban and rural development young people recognize the need to have more stakeholders involved. For this reason, it is important to create continuous forums that enable young people to voice their concerns in all development agendas. This will ensure consultative contribution and meaningful participation of youths.

The involvement of young people at the grassroots level plays a big role in the urban development and mostly this information is not shared among stakeholders and young people. We recognize the importance of social and stream media in highlighting these great youth led initiatives. We therefore call for programs and forums that highlight development initiatives by young people.

We also recognize the important role played by youth resource centers such as the OneStop Youth Center. We therefore call upon the government and other stakeholder to provide resource centers for young people across the country to offer knowledge and skill development.

Young people despite their geographical position, aspire to make a change in their respective communities, unfortunately they lack relevant platform to drive such changes. There is a need to ensure that young people are facilitated to share knowledge across different geographical regions.

The participants felt that the youths need a change of mindset from the victim mentality and become change makers. For this reason, every youth was called upon to make their own contribution in their own small ways towards sustainable urban development. Such activities could be as simple as planting trees, responsible waste disposal and so on.

What can be done to improve quality of life Urban In urban Areas in relation to Goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals?

Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

More than half of the world's population now lives in urban areas. By 2050, it is projected to rise to 6.5 billion people – two-thirds of humanity. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without significantly transforming the way we build and manage our urban spaces.

The rapid growth of cities in the developing world, coupled with increasing rural to urban migration, has led to a boom in mega-cities. In 1990, there were ten mega-cities with 10 million inhabitants or more. In 2014, there are 28 mega-cities, home to a total 453 million people.

Discouraging Rural-Urban migration by progressively transforming rural areas so that the opportunities that young people seek in urban areas can be found in the rural areas. For example, industries do not have to be located in the main cities since they act as a pull factor to cities and fuel the prevalence of rural-urban migration. In addition, extreme poverty in rural areas largely contribute as a push factor of young people from these areas. Addressing this issue by creating efficient linkages between rural, peri-urban and urban areas will go a long way in maintaining a sustainable urban composition.

Poverty is often concentrated in urban spaces while national and city governments struggle to accommodate the rising population in these areas. Making cities safe and sustainable means ensuring access to safe and affordable housing, and upgrading slum settlements. It also involves

investment in public transport, creating green public spaces, and improving urban planning and management in a way that is both participatory and inclusive.

Sustainable city life is one of 17 Global Goals that make up the 2030 Development Agenda. An integrated approach is crucial for progress across the multiple goals.

Due to lack of sustainability in our cities, 65% of the Nairobi population have been dominated by people living in an uncomfortable state as many people come to the towns but because they can't find employment they end up mushrooming the slums. Hence, they lead to congestion in the city and growth of slums hence encroaching greatly to the urban areas. We therefore call upon the governments, both at the county and national level to work in collaboration with young people in job creation in the counties. For example; the county governments can come up with innovation awards to encourage the youth to grow their cities by themselves.

Empowerment is key to young people, as witnessed in the recent past. We acknowledge what the different NGOs have been able to do but that notwithstanding, we further call upon them to come up with new ways of tapping the different overwhelming ideas that the youth have in their minds in ensuring that we have a sustainable city.

Harnessing the Youth Demographic Dividend for Sustainable Rural Urban Development

There are opportunities for sustainable rural urban development through agribusiness to achieve universal and national food security. Young people provide a great human capital and innovation opportunities in enhancing agriculture.

Young people's funds available are not accessible to all due to the bureaucratic procedures and involved. This process discourages innovation due to limited funds and the scope of funding. We therefore call upon the government and other stakeholders including the private sector to create an enabling environment for youth to venture into innovation and business. In addition, young people lack collateral and guarantors during loan application. We hence call upon stakeholders to offer other alternatives to loans such as grant funds.

We acknowledged that most young people have shunned agriculture due to various reasons including search for prestige in white-collar jobs, social status, and the illusion of making good or fast money. We therefore call upon the stakeholders to provide better avenues for young people to venture in agriculture.

Young people migrate from rural to urban areas in search of quality life but end up in; inadequate housing, poor sanitation, exposure to risky behaviors, crime, street families and hopelessness. We call upon the government and other stakeholders to facilitate rural development to create employment of young people in the rural areas. We also call for rehabilitation of young people living in the streets and those exposed to risky behavior in order to assimilate them back to the society.

Young people have demonstrated that they are drivers of change through volunteerism. They are creative, innovative, willing and capable of driving the sustainable rural urban development agenda by creating efficient and innovative linkages that can harmonize these two different but largely interdependent segments of a population. We call upon stakeholders to engage the young

people through volunteerism and consultation in the implementation of the sustainable rural urban development agenda.

Public Space: Their Role in Promoting Social Inclusion

The youths acknowledge the importance of public space in urban development. They call upon the government to redefine, protect, maintain, and promote development of public space.

Public space provides opportunities for personal development and an avenue to enhance creativity and talent especially in terms of sports and arts.

The youth agree that public space is crucial in promoting social inclusion as they are open to all members of society and they act as an avenue for social interaction and social integration because people are able to mingle freely without discrimination.

Both the public and other stakeholders have misused the public spaces. In some areas, the public space such as parks, have been for gangs and cartels to thrive. There have also been areas for idling and breeding zone for antisocial behavior because there is no control and management. These areas are being exploited and they have become extortion grounds as well as corruption zone by different stakeholders.

Therefore, the youths call upon the stakeholders to come up with a sustainable model for the different public utilities to ensure proper use, safety of the public and beneficial to young people and promotion of sustainable urban development. They would also want to see a security model and conditions for utilization to avoid misuse by the public.

We also acknowledge that as young people, we need to have a sense of belonging so as to properly utilize and manage the facilities.

Promoting Equality in our Cities

Young people acknowledge that urban inhabitants cannot be equal in terms of wealth and other provisions. However, we can promote equity where we make sure every member of the society can be able to reach their full potential in the most possible way. Equality can be achieved through fair allocation of resources and just treatment to all without prejudice or favor.

Provision of social amenities should be equally distributed regardless of economic status, background, tribe, nationality or race. Several approaches to bring different stakeholders together should be applied. Such approaches include dialogue and advocacy to promote equality in urban areas, information sharing and adopting a collective approach in managing Public Spaces. We therefore call upon different stakeholders to embrace dialogues with young people and other stakeholders who are often affected by urban development plans.

Effective partnering for the development of “inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities

Some of the approaches that can be used to promote effective collaboration include;

- Safety aspect
- Resilience
- Inclusivity
- Effective partnership

Safety Aspect

State is responsible and accountable for the safety of its citizens. We note that there is too much bureaucratization of safety and how it has brought about the reduction of harm standardization. Safety is expensive when you look at this process in terms of;

- Data recording demanded by a system
- Requires to pull all individuals and institutions
- Reasons for safety as bureaucratic.
- Liability compensation

It is difficult for a single agency to solve complex problems and in such situations, formation of partnerships and involvement of communities is key. For partnerships to work, it's important to have knowledge about your partner's weaknesses and strengths. Honesty and integrity are also very crucial. As young people, we call upon different agencies and stakeholders to recognize the important role played by young people in disaster risk reduction. Young people should be treated as equal partners in the formulation, implementation and monitoring the effectiveness of urban resilience policies both at the county and national levels. Stakeholders are called upon to bring onboard young people and include them and the community at large in the agenda of urban development.

Effective Partnership

In Urban Development, and especially in informal settlements, we have many key players and stakeholders- with each working hard to improve the quality of life in urban areas. While the efforts of each stakeholder are important and appreciated, it is important that new initiatives aim at empowering and strengthening the already existing initiatives instead of establishing a parallel and similar line of service. This will reduce conflicts among key players in the sustainability of cities as well as create a conducive environment for development to thrive.

CONCLUSION

Kenya, like most African countries, is experiencing rapid urbanization as evidenced by data provided by the UNFPA and the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. The 2009 Population and Housing Census shows that slightly less than one-third of the population lived in urban areas, a substantial increase from the 19.3 percent recorded in the 1999 census. 70% of these urban inhabitants are children and young women and men aged below 30 years. The growing urban population has overstretched existing infrastructure and services, leading to growth of informal settlements characterized by overcrowding, lack of basic infrastructure such as sewage, safe drinking water and decent housing, and consequently increased poverty and delinquency. This rapid demographic and spatial transformation may prove to be difficult for the cities, especially small and medium-sized, where capacity is typically inadequate to cope with major urban challenges.

In addition, the rapid urbanization being experienced can bring about many environmental challenges within our urban set-ups. Such areas face faster rate of urban growth with no commensurate prior planning resulting to a conflict between the environmental resource base and developmental needs. The myriad urban challenges negatively affect the ways individuals and institutions- public and private- plan and manage the common affairs of urban areas and cities besides hindering the growth of the urban economy. Taking cognizance of the urban challenges seemingly insurmountable, it is therefore necessary that we strengthen the capacity of our institutions charged with urban management with a view to enabling them effectively play their respective roles. In doing so, there may be need to review our legislative, institutional and policy frameworks to cope with the modern urbanization challenge and also ensure timely service delivery and implementation of plans.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The key recommendations for consideration in the human settlements and new urban agenda include the following:-

1. Reducing the levels in inequality within human settlements and urban areas;
2. Prioritization and planning for vulnerable groups, including the youth, people with disabilities and women, to access shelter in sustainable human settlements;
3. Emphasizing the importance of inclusive urban management and shelter strategies geared towards provision of affordable housing, prevention of slum growth, and effective slum and informal settlements upgrading;
4. UN-Habitat to work with member states, local authorities and other Habitat Agenda Partners to explore new avenues to promote full, effective, structured and sustainable participation of young people and youth-led organizations in relevant decision-making processes, including but not limited to exploring possibilities for a new permanent mechanism on youth within the UN system;
5. Governments to support the participation of youth in decision-making and strengthen the involvement of youth in international forums through the inclusion of youth representatives in their national delegations to the Governing Council and the Habitat III negotiations, in line with the Habitat Agenda, adopted in Istanbul in 1996, and the General Assembly Adopted World Programme of Action for Youth;
6. Prioritization and investment in green energy and other renewable energy sources such as Solar Energy, Geothermal Energy and Wind Energy;
7. Governments to make sure that the process of creating or transforming public space is an inclusive one, where a broad spectrum of the public is represented, in order to create inclusive public spaces that do not discriminate against or exclude certain groups, with a special focus on young women;
8. UN-Habitat to address the high rates of youth unemployment, underemployment, vulnerable employment and informal employment in urban areas through developing pilot programs and policies, such as scaling up the Urban Youth Fund program and the One Stop Youth Resource Centre model, enabling the agency to work with member states and local authorities developing and implementing targeted and integrated local and national youth employment and entrepreneurship programs and policies for inclusive, sustainable and innovative job creation;
9. Enhance support to young people by mainstreaming youth programmes permanent coordination mechanism to engage youth led initiatives and nurture youthful talents;
10. Enhancing capacity for implementation and strengthening of decentralization and devolution;
11. Rehabilitate and prevent further development of street children and street families in urban areas; and
12. Emphasizing on effective and inclusive urban planning for human settlements, provision of basic services and management of urban sprawl.