

## HLPF 2020

### ***Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: Realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.***

#### **Theme 6: Bolstering local action to accelerate implementation**

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**Co-convenors:** UN-DESA, UN-Habitat, UNODC, UNECE and UNESCAP

**Corresponding GSDR Entry point:** Urban and peri-urban development

**Specific lens:** COVID-19 impact and responses

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*The African Centre for Cities is an interdisciplinary research and teaching programme focused on quality scholarship regarding the dynamics of unsustainable urbanization processes in Africa. Its mission is to facilitate critical urban research and policy discourses for the promotion of vibrant, democratic and sustainable urban development in the global South from an African perspective.*

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#### **1. How can transparent urban planning and design help in creating inclusive access to housing, basic services and infrastructure, environmental sustainability, improved air and water quality, and healthier communities?**

Central to achieving inclusive access to key public services is transparent multi-level governance that draws on actors and institutions across different levels within and outside of formal government institutions. This also involves generating and building an evidence base that includes qualitative data on (informal) service delivery systems in order to inform decisions and monitor their implementation.

Key policy tools to shape and facilitate such processes are **National Urban Policies (NUPs)** that can strategically coordinate the investments and programmes of various actors, including line ministries, State Owned Entities, local government authorities, donors and the private sector – thereby unlocking numerous interconnected benefits of urban development and urbanisation. However, in Africa only 18 countries have adopted NUPs and many lack the technical or financial resources to implement them.<sup>1</sup> Hence, more support and partnerships are needed to develop such tools, but also link them to the adequate resources/mobilisation strategies to support their implementation in a way that addresses the social, economic and environmental dimensions of urban planning and design and the ways in which these can enhance each other.

Under the Coalition for Urban Transitions, a leading global initiative launched in 2016 by the New Climate Economy, a partnership of diverse stakeholders have worked together across five continents to help national governments unlock the economic power of inclusive, zero-carbon cities.<sup>2</sup> As part of this work on the African continent, in Tanzania the Coalition supported the national government's efforts on urban

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<sup>1</sup> See Cartwright, A., Palmer, I., Taylor, A., Pieterse, E., Parnell, S., Colenbrander, S. (2018). *Developing Prosperous and Inclusive Cities in Africa - National Urban Policies to the Rescue?* Coalition for Urban Transitions. London and Washington, DC.

<sup>2</sup> More information available here: <https://urbantransitions.global/about-the-coalition/>

policy making, with an emphasis on ensuring inclusive and sustainable urban development and identifying a lower carbon pathway to address climate change. The programme developed a Roadmap to inform the country's Urban Development Policy (UDP) which was launched in August 2019. The Roadmap was designed to support national decision-makers in Tanzania to move forward and better coordinate a centrally driven approach to improved and more cost-effective urban service delivery, and to use urbanisation as a tool for structural reform of the economy and to support development. To achieve this, the Coalition initially formed the Tanzania Urbanisation Laboratory (TULab), a community-convened national initiative that brings together stakeholders from a variety of sectors and levels of government. The TULab collaboratively produced key analyses relevant to decision-makers and developed the roadmap to inform action-oriented policy recommendations. The TULab gained credibility for its critical and constructive dialogue on Tanzania's urbanisation challenges and opportunities. It also established a community of practice that continues to meet and address critical issues facing cities in Tanzania. Through the work of the TULab and the Roadmap produced for the UDP, the programme has been instrumental in fast-tracking the urban agenda in Tanzania, anchoring the agenda in government policy, and creating urban champions within the Government of Tanzania. The programme has engaged government officials across departments and utilities on the urban agenda.<sup>3</sup>

In Ghana, the Coalition's programme provided strategic input on the national urbanisation and green city development process and advised on institutional and policy reform needed to stimulate investment, inclusion and increased prosperity. To achieve this, the Coalition developed a Guideline that reviews and evaluates Ghana's 2013 National Urbanisation Policy (NUP), identifying areas for action and enhancing the case for its further implementation. The Guideline delivers a review of Ghana's NUP, supported by an in-depth review of the political economy of urbanisation and the links between urbanisation, industrialisation and a climate resilient economy. The Coalition aims to fill the knowledge management gap on urbanisation and to elevate the status and broader understanding of urban issues within the national government agenda. The Coalition convened the Ghana Urbanisation Think Tank (GUTT), an interdisciplinary community of urban thinkers and influencers focused on supporting the processes of urban development management in Ghana through dialogue, knowledge sharing and a commitment to developing strategies for improving urban development management. The Coalition works together with Ghanaian decision makers and influencers to ensure that research is informed by lived realities, and that research findings are produced and owned by local decision makers. These co-produced research and policy dialogues will support the national government in securing favourable outcomes from the current urbanisation phase.<sup>4</sup>

Knowledge gaps still exist when it comes to the relationship between the **built environment and health**, especially in informal settlements and among vulnerable population groups such as children, the elderly and people with suppressed immune systems and are likely to aggravate gender-related inequalities. The current global pandemic has brought this starkly to the fore. More support is needed for intersectoral policy approaches for addressing and improving health through urban planning and development. In Cameroon, researchers have worked with a variety of stakeholders, including academic, policy, private and civil society partners, to explore stakeholder perspectives on urban health priorities and experiences

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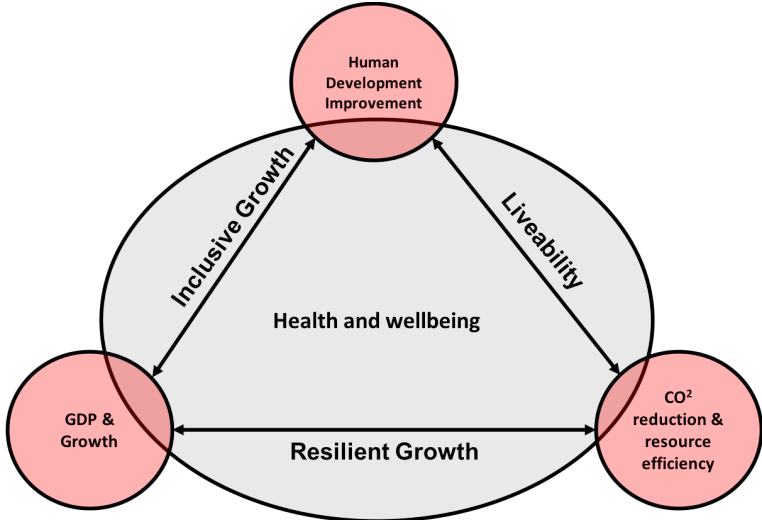
<sup>3</sup> More information available here: <https://urbantransitions.global/en/country-programmes/tanzania/>

<sup>4</sup> More information available here: <https://urbantransitions.global/en/country-programmes/ghana/>

of and opportunities for intersectoral collaboration with a view of mitigating health risks through human settlement interventions.<sup>5</sup>

**2. How can transparent urban and territorial planning and development support economic growth which is diverse, balanced, inclusive, safe, green and sustainable?**

Most of the questions around inclusive growth rely principally on economics as the metrics for measurement and fail to fully capture other important considerations such as human development improvement and Co2 reduction and resource efficiency. Policymakers need to be cognisant of the fact that a focus on growth alone may not always deliver the wider development outcomes imagined through certain economic thinking and that there may be trade-offs between these different dimensions in order to achieve overall **health and wellbeing**. The growth related questions therefore need to balance and support the integrated challenges faced in many Southern communities (detailed in Figure 1), especially the workings of the **informal economy**.



Source: adapted from Pieterse et al. (2015)

**Food systems** represent an important area which cuts across urban development and the economy which has not sufficiently been recognized. The current international food security agenda, with its focus on smallholder agriculture, and the linked city regionalism perspective, ignores the reality of rapid urbanization, growing informality and urban food insecurity, across the global North and South. The critical relationship between inclusive growth and food security remains framed as an issue of agricultural production and employment. Despite its central role in urban life and the scale and pace of urbanisation, food is absent from all National Urban Plans and urban food is absent from the SDGs. Urban food, urban food systems governance, and wider questions about the intersection between food and urban policy remain absent from many development debates. Food system sustainability and security is not just impacted by food production, but by a range of different practices such as food transportation, market structure, and food safety that are predominantly urban rather than rural in nature. As such, food and the

<sup>5</sup> More information available here: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23748834.2020.1741966>

urban food system intersects with multiple other urban systems, from health to sanitation, from climate responsiveness to infrastructure, and from governance to economics and planning.

While there is an increasing focus on urban food security and the impact of urbanisation on food systems, knowledge gaps exist when it comes to the workings of entire food systems and associated impacts beyond food production and accessibility. Without greater focus on pro-poor urban food systems governance the current global governance agenda will not address the development challenges, especially in the global South. There is a need to prioritise urban public policy discussions that foreground the urban poor and systemic inequalities – and food offers great utility as a lens to engage these issues.

The Hungry Cities Partnership (HCP) is a collaborative research project including cities from across the world: Mexico City, Mexico; Kingston Jamaica; Cape Town, South Africa; Maputo, Mozambique; Nairobi, Kenya; Bangalore, India; and Nanjing, China. The partnership broadly focuses on the growing crisis of urban food insecurity in the South through the converging and mutually reinforcing challenges associated with urbanisation, food insecurity and uneven economic growth. Since its creation in 2015, the network has worked on engage these intersecting challenges through the following areas of enquiry: 1) Rapid Urbanization, Food Insecurity and Inclusive Growth; 2) Reshaping Informal Food Systems through Inclusive Growth; 3) Youth Entrepreneurship in the Informal Food Economy; 4) Competition and Inclusive Growth in the Urban Food Economy; 5) Gender as Cross-Cutting Theme.<sup>6</sup>

**3. Which kinds of policies, plans, governance, investments and partnerships can help create transparent, inclusive, healthier and safer cities and communities that are able to withstand destabilizing effects of negative social phenomena, such as corruption, drug and illicit firearms trafficking and terrorism, unregulated migration, lack of access to public goods, widespread public protests etc.?**

There are many policies, plans and partnerships that focus on building (urban) resilience, especially when it comes to mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate. **Social phenomena** such as corruption have received much less attention, despite their everyday impacts on the urban social and economic fabric and development, especially in the global South.

The 'Cities of Integrity' research project puts forward a strong research and action agenda for why focussing on the **promotion of integrity** (and not just the compliance-driven notion of fighting corruption) at the urban scale is really vital yet vastly underexplored. Many municipal officials, political decision makers, civil society advocates and built environment practitioners have very few practical tools that help them better understand and effectively address urban planning corruption. Urban planners are a pivotal stakeholder group to focus on in the promotion of urban integrity, as they constantly have to negotiate and balance public and private interests in urban development. Working in Zambia and South Africa, the project has therefore focused on activating and promoting professional integrity and the professional structures that enable it through qualitative action experiments that are built around targeted training interventions for urban planners.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> More information available here: <https://hungrycities.net>

<sup>7</sup> More information available here: <https://ace.globalintegrity.org/projects/cities/> and here: <https://www.africancentreforcities.net/new-acc-paper-argues-for-strengthening-integrity-within-the-planning-profession-to-combat-corruption-in-urban-development/>

On the other hand, the drivers of corruption, such as widespread poverty, high unemployment rates and a lack of trust in public institutions also need to be addressed, for instance through **macro-economic policies** that invest in the labour-intensive investments in public goods and infrastructure.

At another level, one of the fundamental constraints to inclusive and equitable urban planning and development remains the formalistic and unhelpfully rigid **planning systems**, often still based on outdated colonial and other twentieth century precepts that enforce single use zones and unrealistic and inappropriate standards. These need comprehensive overhaul, as advocated by the Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS)<sup>8</sup> and others.

Such planning instruments, as well as the entire basis of operation of local authority processes and procedures are commonly top-down, bureaucratic and inaccessible to the urban poor and inhabitants of informal areas, in particular. Hence they are widely perceived as being exclusive, imposed, non-participatory and elitist. Alternative, more inclusive approaches and methods are required that tackle these widespread constraints and problems by enabling and facilitating substantive participation by all stakeholder groups. The wide range of **co-design/co-creation/co-production methods**, as innovated, for example, by the global sustainable urban knowledge and research center Mistra Urban Futures through multi-stakeholder institutional partnerships in cities in various world regions, hold particular promise.<sup>9</sup>

#### **4. What is the role of science, technology, communication and innovation in the transformation to sustainable and equitable urban systems, which also incorporate and address informality and help overcome the digital divide?**

While science, technology, communication and innovation are important for the transformation to sustainable and equitable urban systems, **culture** is noticeably missing. The social and cultural lives of urban residents are often lost in technical responses to urban inequality, and environmental stability is often thought of in scientific terms. Although the SDGs, NUA, UCLG's Agenda 21 for Culture recognize the importance of culture, *how* this translates into implementation in local contexts, particularly in state responses to urban development challenges, has been under-explored.

The UCLG's Agenda 21 for Culture proposes that culture be recognized as the fourth pillar of sustainability arguing that '[c]ultures forge dynamic and interactive relationships between people and their environments'. Considering urban development through a socio-cultural lens can contribute to urban sustainability through promoting cultural rights; recognising how heritage, diversity and creativity are foundations of urban life; stimulating citizenship through building social and cultural capacities; supporting sustainable economies within cultural industries and beyond; encouraging democracy, equity and inclusion; planning cities through a cultural lens; promoting creative forms of urban governance; contributing to citizenship and plurality through deploying different uses of information and technology; and elevating the role of culture in supporting environmental responsibility.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, cultural objectives rarely appear in actionable ways in policy instruments outside of culture, heritage and the arts. There are unique opportunities to insert socio-cultural imperatives in other forms

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<sup>8</sup> More information available here: <https://www.africanplanningschools.org.za/>

<sup>9</sup> More information available here: <https://www.mistraurbanfutures.org/en>

<sup>10</sup> More information available here: <http://www.agenda21culture.net>

of urban development processes that are cross-cutting. UNESCO's 'Culture for the 2030 Agenda' gives a comprehensive set of suggestions on how culture can support the implementation of the SDGs.<sup>11</sup>

**Cultural mapping and planning** processes can enrich locally relevant and responsive urban planning and design processes by recognizing the socio-cultural dimensions of service and infrastructure provisions. This kind of mapping recognizes the importance of cultural infrastructure, social networks and socio-ecological resilience. Social and cultural impact assessments have proved useful mechanisms for ensuring inclusionary design processes and mitigate against negative effects of urban development.

In doing so, planning needs to engage with **informality** - in terms of settlements, service delivery systems, and work. Rather than trying to formalize informality, city plans need to be developed which include reasonable and responsible regulations. It is important to see informality as part of city development, rather than a problem that needs to be removed. Technology in turn has an important role to play in cities. However, rather than striving to be 'smart' in a narrow hi-tech sense, cities should strive to augment existing systems of service delivery with digital and technological support. In other words, smart systems should build on existing practices in ways that are inclusive rather than exclusive by virtue of cost, inaccessibility and inappropriateness to the lives and livelihoods of many poor urban residents.

#### **5. How can local and national governments work together to ensure adequate resources are available for sustainable, inclusive, safe and transparent urban development? How can local government financing be made more predictable and robust?**

Collaboration between local and national government is imperative to ensure adequate resources for development. However, many local governments, especially in Africa, rely on national government transfers and have limited autonomy to mobilize local revenues, control expenditures and engage in borrowing. To **make local governments more effective**, we need national fiscal systems that are supportive of their needs, capabilities, and constraints. As local governments are diverse, a country's fiscal design and inter-governmental system must also have built-in heterogeneity and flexibility so those city governments which are able to take on more functions, mobilize debt finance, and manage complex trade-offs in investment priorities, are able to do so. An example of such support is the South African Cities Support Programme managed by the South African National Treasury as a case of designing special fiscal instruments to support urban development.<sup>12</sup>

Overall, there is a need to consider infrastructural investments which build on existing 'popular' responses to service needs. Rather than focus on delivering large scale infrastructure projects, local governments need to identify and **support localized practices that are sustainable and effective**. These systems need support to be more connected, affordable, and safe. Rather than trying to replace these systems, support to extend, enhance, and improve them is necessary. To do this, local governments need to be able to work with **small scale local actors**. This links directly to the point under 4 above about 'smart' city infrastructure.

The Delegated Management Model in Kisumu, Kenya is a case of extending a network in incremental ways, through the partnership between the Kisumu Water and Sewerage (KIWASCO) company and local organisations that have extended KIWASCO's infrastructure into unplanned areas and manage the

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<sup>11</sup> More information available here: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000264687>

<sup>12</sup> More information available here: <https://csp.treasury.gov.za/Pages/default.aspx>

collection and billing of water services in these areas.<sup>13</sup> Other good practices include the digitalization of informal transport operators in many countries, or the provision of microgrids for energy which can be interoperable with larger systems.

6. **How can urban, peri-urban and rural areas be connected through infrastructure that is resilient and integrated with transparent, urban and territorial development plans, focusing on access, affordability, inclusivity, resource-efficiency and innovation?**

**Transport** is central to the accessibility and equity of infrastructure systems but continues to be overlooked. The current global pandemic has supercharged the transition in transport planning toward access-based planning, with access equity as the objective. During global lockdowns around the world, the mode of access for the rich shifted from mobility-based access to digitally-based access, while for the poor it shifted from mobility-based to proximity-based access (walking). This is an acceleration of a shift that had already started. The digital divide has exacerbated the inequitable access, and unsustainable urban planning has hamstrung any proximity-based access that is possible. This widening access gap will be wrenched further open with every epidemic, natural disaster, climate change-related effect or other stressor that threatens mobility-based access. At its most fundamental, the pandemic is forcing a profound and urgent re-evaluation in urban areas worldwide about the nature, purpose, desirability and sustainability of citywide mass mobility infrastructural systems.

Science, technology, communication and innovation tend to favour those who have more access options and a higher ability to adapt to change. Blue collar and service workers cannot work from home, they are beholden to a mode of access that will increasingly fall on the poorest to finance and maintain. Current global developments agendas and goals such as SDG 11.2, do not sufficiently acknowledge the shift to access-based planning which goes beyond access to mobility infrastructure. Instead, overall access across the three modes: **mobility, proximity, and digital technology** (transport, land use, and the internet) should be central, and the **equity** of that distribution.

The over-dependence on technological innovation, at the expense of innovation in planning and investments, has exacerbated this problem. Current good practices of **transport innovations** that target access equity are space prioritisation for informal transport (eg. dedicated lanes) and significant investment in non-motorized transport access to employment nodes (pedestrianisation schemes, sidewalk infrastructure and cycling lanes). The city of Kigali, Rwanda is a pioneer on the African continent in this regard.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, science and technology innovations that would contribute to more equitable access are those that **bridge the digital divide** by lowering the barrier of entry to digital-based access, such as the use of mobile money-transfer services such as M-Pesa and local (often bicycle-based) delivery services in low-income communities.

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<sup>13</sup> See Nzengya, D. M. (2018). 'Improving water service to the urban poor through delegated management: lessons from the city of Kisumu, Kenya.' *Development Policy Review* 36(2): 190–202.

<sup>14</sup> More information available here: <https://mobilizesummit.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/07/Alphonse-Nkurunziza.pdf>