

POLICY REFORM

Integrating nature and climate change considerations into urban planning policies in African cities

Setting the scene

THE SITUATION PRIOR TO UNA INTERVENTIONS

Due to a range of challenges, complexities and competing needs, in many African cities, urban natural assets (e.g., forests, wetlands, rivers etc.), the ecosystem services they provide, and their link to climate resilience haven't historically been fully integrated into urban planning policies or embedded as fundamental principles. This has very real implications for environmental management and sustainable development. After all, without policies that benchmark best practice and set the parameters for natural capital to be prioritised, we can't possibly hope for any meaningful actions to be taken on the ground and for nature to be sustainably managed or protected in practice.



KEY IMPACT

Through tailored, targeted city-level interventions, the UNA programme created the space for decision-makers to fill the gaps in urban policies and planning guidelines in order to incorporate nature and climate change considerations.



CASE STUDY CITIES





DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA

In Tanzania, urban planning is guided by the 2007 Tanzanian Urban Planning Guidelines (TUPG), which were developed in line with the Urban Planning Act (2007), the Human Settlements Development Policy (2000) and the Land Act (1999). The TUPG offers direction on how cities should be built and where development should take place, but fails to factor in critical issues like urban nature and climate change. As a result, as cities like Dar es Salaam have expanded and densified in the face of rapid urbanisation, natural assets have gradually been degraded. Biodiversity loss compromises the resilience of a city, making it more vulnerable to the risks associated with climate change – indeed, we're already seeing that low-lying areas of Dar es Salaam are increasingly being subjected to annual flooding events as a consequence.



ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

As a country that faces multiple development and service delivery challenges, Ethiopia hasn't (understandably) tended to position nature and climate change considerations as key principles when it comes to urban planning. This is especially the case in the rapidly expanding Addis Ababa, where concerns about sustainability are often overshadowed by what are considered to be more pressing issues, like high unemployment rates, poor waste management and limited access to sanitation.

Programme intervention

THE COURSE OF ACTION

To encourage policy reform, it's important to actively engage with decision-makers to support transformation. The UNA team was asked by city actors in Dar es Salaam and Addis Ababa to facilitate a series of knowledge-building workshops and multi-level governance discussions, aimed, first and foremost, at deepening stakeholders' understanding of the value that nature brings to their cities.

AIM



To enable fundamental shifts in planning culture and institutional structures by identifying gaps in urban policies where nature and climate change considerations should be integrated.

Guided by input from a private consultant and research from local universities, these engagements provided the space to collectively explore the impacts that climate change could potentially have on cities if not taken into account, and the many benefits of bringing nature and climate change considerations into official town planning protocols.

Key actors in the partner cities then identified nature-related gaps in their urban planning policies, and considered various opportunities for filling these gaps. Resource and reference material that policy-makers would need to successfully incorporate nature and climate concerns into planning guidelines was consulted throughout this process.



DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA

After jointly reviewing the critical gaps in the 2007 TUPG, we supported the co-development of a focused and practical set of recommendations regarding how and where these guidelines should be updated. These recommendations were presented to the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development (MLHSD) at the closing of this exercise.



ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

In Ethiopia, based on a specific request from the Addis Ababa city resilience officers, the UNA team and key city stakeholders undertook a thorough review of opportunities for public-private partnerships (PPPs) aimed at harnessing nature-based solutions (NBS) for improved resilience. The results were then presented to the mayoral office.

Evidence of change

KEY OUTCOMES

Urban planning policy-makers in both cities clearly demonstrated a deeper understanding of the value of nature, how it can address climate change challenges in their contexts, and how it yields a myriad of other benefits that can ripple out to make urban landscapes resilient and future-proof. They also indicated a firm grasp of the gaps in their policies where nature and climate change considerations could and should sit.

While we hoped that stakeholders would begin to engage in high-level discussions around how changes could be made to urban planning policies and legislation, the UNA team found that they actually went beyond thinking and talking to direct action, taking up the learnings from our various engagements.

It seems that the UNA processes were so effective at inspiring a sense of ownership around nature among city officials that they were driven to put thoughts into action and take steps that went well beyond the scope of the planned intervention. This is particularly noteworthy as it takes real commitment for a policy-maker in Africa to drive change when reforming long-standing policies is often characterised by arduous processes and mountains of paperwork.



NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS STAND AT THE INTERSECTION OF SO MANY INTERLINKED AND COMPLEX ASPECTS THAT ARE AT THE TOP OF THE ADDIS ABABA CITY GOVERNMENT AGENDA – FROM SUSTAINABLE WATER MANAGEMENT TO RESTORING THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT TO CLIMATE RESILIENCE TO HUMAN HEALTH AND WELL-BEING AND TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. WE NOW REALISE THAT INVESTMENTS IN NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS WILL HELP TO SIMULTANEOUSLY ACHIEVE MULTIPLE SYNERGETIC SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES.

TEKELE UMA: *(Engineer),
Deputy Mayor, City Government of
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*



BY BEING PART OF THE UNA PROJECT, WE IN DAR ES SALAAM CITY NOW UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF MANAGING OUR URBAN NATURAL ASSETS AND THE NEED TO BALANCE BIODIVERSITY WITH DEVELOPMENT.

GRACE MBENA: *Urban Planner and
Coordinator for Environmental Planning
and Management, Dar es Salaam
City Council, Tanzania*



DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA

Spurred on by the UNA interventions, the MLHSD signed a letter committing themselves to implementing the supplied recommendations and updating the 2007 TUPG accordingly. They have already initiated engagements aimed at developed modern, context-specific planning guidelines that incorporate nature and climate change adaptation.

Changes have also been made in Dar es Salaam to the city's budget and annual work plan to give more prominence to urban natural assets in various departments' activities.



ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

Guided by our work in Ethiopia, a PPP Directorate has been established within the Addis Ababa Planning Commissioner's office to identify, develop and implement nature-related PPP opportunities for the city.

The City Resilience Office has also committed to developing an innovative financing strategy for NBS to be implemented in Addis Ababa. In addition, the City of Addis Ababa has requested to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with ICLEI Africa to support urban policy updates, which shows a commitment to driving reform in legislation in favour of nature.

LONG-TERM IMPACTS AND SIGNIFICANCE

A key impact of the UNA interventions is having ensured a deeper understanding at a high level of government – where the decisions are made – of how nature can help address multiple urban challenges. Senior officials – those who have the power to bring about change – now have a personal sense of ownership and buy-in when it comes to natural capital, as well as an enthusiasm to see transformation in their cities, which we hope will ultimately translate into direct action on the ground.

That is the power of policy reform, after all – it lays out visions, establishes parameters and sets rules that determine how decisions are made and that trigger important behavioural change. In this way, new policies ultimately create the landscape for action and best practice implementation.

This is why these specific policy developments are hugely significant for both Dar es Salaam and Addis Ababa. As planners in Tanzania are bound by the law to consider the recommendations in the TUPG, when this official document is updated, nature and climate change will have to be considered and given weight in all future local urban development plans. Conversely, plans that fail to consider these issues will probably not be authorised. With the new TUPG promoting NBS and informing the location of infrastructure to better protect natural capital, there is likely to be an increase in nature and biodiversity in Tanzanian cities. As a result, people will be less vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and other shocks in the long term.

Similarly, once the PPP Directorate in Addis Ababa is fully operational, this model will create room for new opportunities for the city to access much-needed finance, as well as the skills and technologies required to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of projects that bring NBS to the city. Again, this shift should have positive long-term effects on human well-being and the ability of the city to withstand changes and extreme events in future.



KEY LEARNINGS

- All stakeholders – including high-level decision-makers – should be included from the very beginning of the policy reform process and provided with the targeted information they need to support impactful decision-making.
- To encourage policy reform, it's important to provide the space for city stakeholders to identify their own gaps and come up with solutions that suit their own context – after all, they know their cities best.
- In order to inspire those who have the power to make change to continue to do so, partner organisations must let go of the reins and encourage personal buy-in and ownership.
- Updating policies and planning guidelines is not always enough in and of itself to bring about on-the-ground change. Similarly, it typically doesn't have immediate impact. It's key to facilitate skills development, build knowledge, establish new processes, and provide concrete tools and resources to city stakeholders so that they can take creative solutions forward (see [Impact Story 2](#) on practice reform).

About the UNA Programme

Implemented by ICLEI's Cities Biodiversity Center, the UNA programme is designed to support local governments in Africa in addressing the daily challenges they experience around protecting and revitalising their urban natural assets. It specifically seeks to improve human well-being and build climate resilience through integrating nature-based solutions into land-use planning.

To date, the UNA programme supports three flagship projects; **Urban Natural Assets for Africa (UNA Africa)**, **Urban Natural Assets: Rivers for Life (UNA Rivers)** and **Urban Natural Assets: Coasts for Life (UNA Coasts)**.

THERE HAVE BEEN IMPACTS IN TERMS OF POLICY. WE ARE SEEING ISSUES LIKE OPEN SPACES BEING PUT INTO POLICIES, BEING GIVEN MORE WEIGHT, BEING BETTER CONSIDERED.

DR. ALLY NAMANGAYA: *Dean School Spatial Planning and Social Sciences, Ardhi University, Tanzania*



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