THE VALUE OF URBAN NATURAL ASSETS WHEN PLANNING FOR RESILIENT AFRICAN CITIES:

CONSIDERATIONS AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Profiling key lessons learnt through ICLEI's Urban Natural Assets for Africa (UNA) programme

URBAN NATURAL ASSETS FOR AFRICA
HANDBOOK SERIES

HANDBOOK 8

Capacitating cities:

Creating spaces for reflection and effective dialogue in sub-Saharan Africa

ICLEI
Local Governments for Sustainability

C·B·C
Cities Biodiversity Center

SwedBio
A programme at Stockholm Resilience Centre

Stockholm Resilience Centre
Sustainability Science for Biosphere Stewardship

Stockholm University

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS HANDBOOK

- Capacity and resource constraints in African cities tend to push officials into a reactive mode, where the focus is on coping rather than on innovation and proactive planning for the future. As a result, capacity building must be prioritised.
- Creating spaces for reflection, evaluation, dialogue and conversation is key to capacity building, but traditional workshops are overdone in African cities. We must, therefore, adopt novel approaches to create these transformative spaces.
- The UNA programme employs a number of unique methods to build capacity and share knowledge in African cities. These include innovative games and interactive exercises that equip participants with new tools and understandings, and address everything from process and project co-ordination challenges to language discrepancies.

WHO SHOULD CONSULT THIS HANDBOOK?

Funder and donor institutions

Organisations working on sustainability and development issues in Africa

City officials (planning, environment, engineers, developers and related disciplines)

City officials (economists, finance and procurement departments)

Academic researchers (and related organisations)

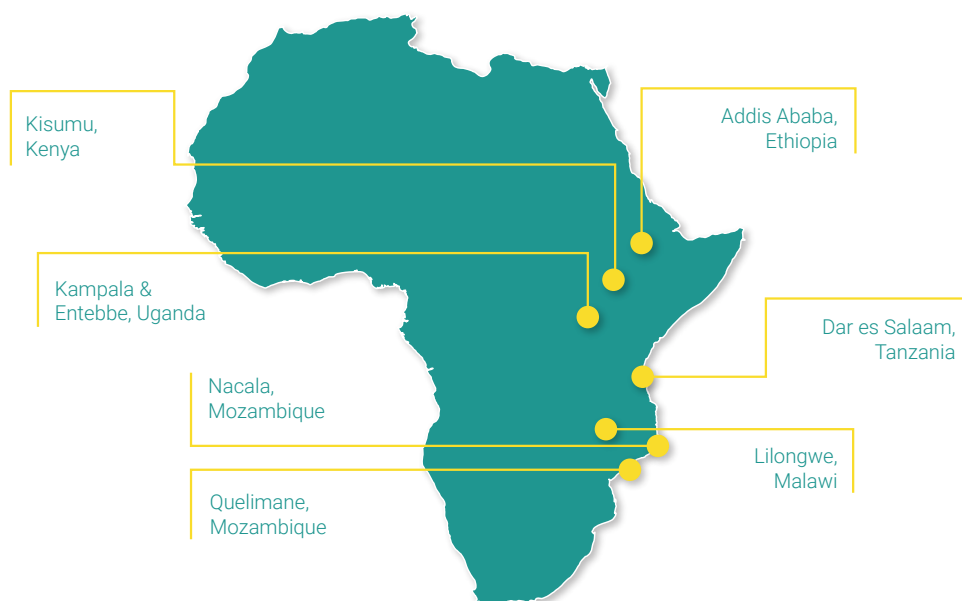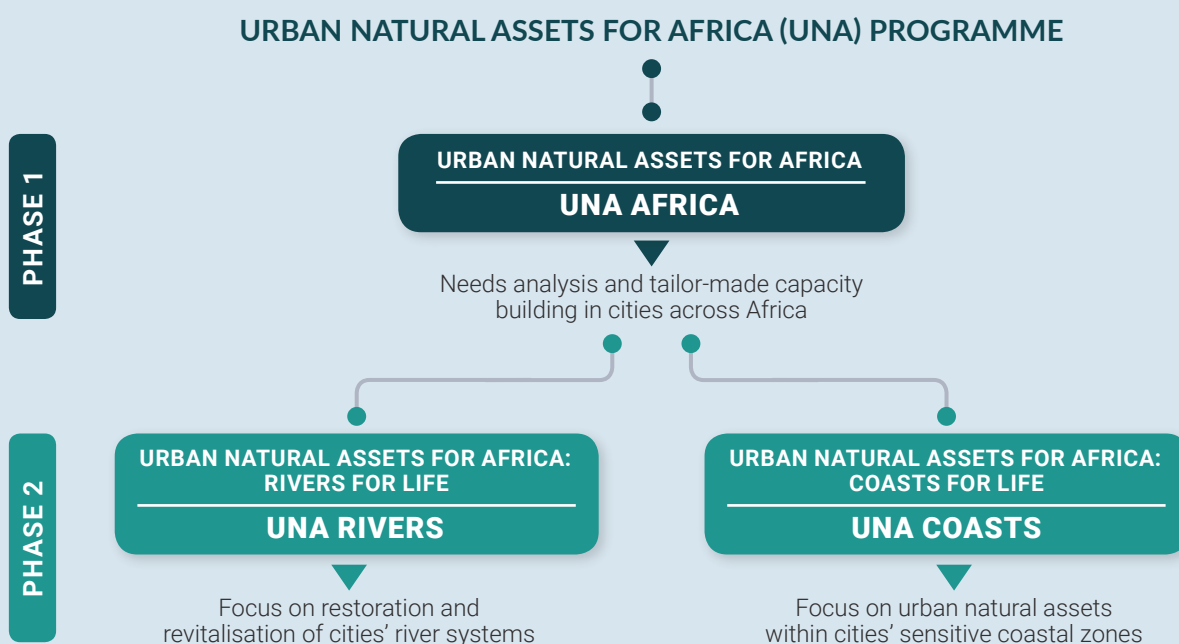### The relevance and significance of this handbook series

The ICLEI Cities Biodiversity Center (CBC), a global centre hosted by ICLEI Africa, developed this handbook series to showcase key considerations for integrating urban natural assets into city planning in sub-Saharan Africa. All lessons profiled were gathered through the implementation of the UNA programme.

By sharing approaches that have been successfully tailored to African cities, these handbooks seek to support the development of future urban sustainability projects that are both more effective and better suited to the local context. Learnings also shed light on how ICLEI Africa is working with local authorities to ensure alignment with international policies and agendas (like the Paris Agreement). It's imperative that we share Africa's insights and lessons now so these can feed into discussions as the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) work on developing a new post-2020 global biodiversity strategy.

THE UNA PROGRAMME AND FLAGSHIP PROJECTS

Initiated in 2014, the UNA programme is designed to assist local governments in Africa build climate resilience through addressing the daily challenges they experience around protecting and revitalising their urban natural assets. To date, three flagship projects have been developed under the UNA umbrella. All broadly aim to integrate nature-based solutions into land-use planning for increased climate resilience and enhanced human well-being.

URBAN NATURAL ASSETS FOR AFRICA (UNA) PROGRAMME

PHASE 1

URBAN NATURAL ASSETS FOR AFRICA
UNA AFRICA

Needs analysis and tailor-made capacity building in cities across Africa

PHASE 2

URBAN NATURAL ASSETS FOR AFRICA: RIVERS FOR LIFE
UNA RIVERS

Focus on restoration and revitalisation of cities' river systems

URBAN NATURAL ASSETS FOR AFRICA: COASTS FOR LIFE
UNA COASTS

Focus on urban natural assets within cities' sensitive coastal zones

Kisumu, Kenya

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Kampala & Entebbe, Uganda

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Nacala, Mozambique

Lilongwe, Malawi

Quelimane, Mozambique

CAPACITATING CITIES:
CREATING SPACES FOR REFLECTION AND EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

THE NEED FOR CAPACITY BUILDING IN AFRICAN CITIES

African cities have come a long way in their efforts to achieve sustainable development. However, resource and capacity constraints continue to limit municipalities' ability to realise goals and address all the developmental challenges of the 21st century. Capacity limitations are considered to be a major stumbling block when it comes to adequate service delivery[1]. This is such a pressing issue that the World Bank felt the need to step in and, between 1995 and 2004, provided $9 billion in loans and close to $900 million in grants and administrative budget to support capacity building in Africa[2].

Capacity constraints – including lack of access to much-needed knowledge and skill sets – are especially problematic because they tend to push government officials into a reactive mode, where the focus is on simply coping, getting by and meeting basic daily targets. Within this context, there is no room for creativity, proactive planning or long-term strategic thinking, and yet innovation is exactly what's required if city officials are to make robust decisions within complex, ever-changing environments.

Needless to say, there's a great need in African cities for effective capacity building that focuses on improving governance, transferring skills, boosting knowledge and enhancing processes. Currently, however, capacity development tends to be undervalued as a mechanism for change. This is, in part, because, until now, there has been a heavy reliance on traditional workshops, which are both overdone in Africa and not always effective[3].

THE NEED FOR A *FRESH APPROACH* TO CAPACITY BUILDING IN AFRICAN CITIES

A unique alternative to the standard workshop format is clearly required. Based on experience in African cities, ICLEI Africa has concluded that capacity-building exercises should ideally be innovative, interactive and inclusive, and should create space for collaboration, conversation, creativity, knowledge co-creation, effective dialogue and reflection. The latter is particularly important as opportunities for reflection aren't often built into a city's operational life – government officials don't regularly get the chance to assess what's been done, what worked and what needs improvement.

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CONSIDERATIONS AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Nacala, Mozambique. Experiential learning activities engage participants actively and creates space for the holistic thinking needed for managing a city's natural assets.

By focusing on these "softer" deliverables, and not just on traditional training and the presentation of hard facts, capacity-building activities serve to develop strong relationships between stakeholders (see Handbook 7) and to shift the way practitioners work together, which helps to create "entry points" in decision-making into which nature-based solutions can more effectively be embedded. A more creative approach doesn't just equip stakeholders with new tools and understandings, but also with the confidence to act (even when information is not available), to take initiative and to think outside the box.

The UNA programme employs a number of unique methods to build capacity and share knowledge in various African cities. These include innovative games and interactive exercises that focus heavily on process (see Handbook 9), disrupt power dynamics and allow important conversations and areas of tension to emerge. All such activities promote experiential learning ("learning by doing"), which has proven to be more effective than traditional methods in helping stakeholders to engage with new practices and ways of thinking.

See the Case Studies for more information on UNA's interactive capacity-building exercises, which are used to address everything from project co-ordination challenges to language discrepancies.

FROM UNA PROJECTS:

CREATING SPACES FOR REFLECTION AND EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

CASE STUDY 8A   INTERACTIVE NATURAL ASSET MAPPING

Capacity-building exercises are being used as part of the UNA Coasts project in Nacala and Quelimane, Mozambique in order to help stakeholders to identify their city's most important coastal natural assets and better understand the value each adds to the region. Participants are split into groups and each group is given a large piece of paper featuring a full list of potential urban natural assets on one axis and a list of ecosystem services on another axis. Once teams have selected natural assets relevant to their city, they talk at length about the importance of each and use coloured dots to indicate which services are associated with which assets. For instance, next to the natural asset "mangroves", groups may place dots corresponding with the following services: "recreation, leisure and tourism", "natural hazard protection", "marine breeding", "carbon sequestration", "erosion control" and "building material".

This activity generates useful data that can be turned into valuable outputs, like hotspot maps. Even more importantly, however, it a) encourages participants to engage in in-depth discussions about natural asset management that continue long after the exercise has ended, b) builds important relationships between stakeholders, c) makes room for new ideas and understandings to emerge, and d) puts research/project issues into a broader, socially relevant context.

Nacala, Mozambique. Experiential learning activities allow participants to build relationships and reflect on stakeholder mandates, roles and responsibilities, thereby improving coordination and governance

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CASE STUDY 8B SPILLING THE BEANS: A GAME EXPLORING RESILIENCE

Adapted from a similar version used by the Future Resilience for African Cities and Lands (FRACTAL) project team, *spilling the beans* is a capacity-building game that aims to generate dialogue about building resilience and improve leadership around resource management. Eight players are each given a cup marked with a line on its inside surface – this line, the height of which differs from cup to cup, represents the water needs of a particular group/sector (e.g., farmers, community members or industry). One large bowl filled with beans is placed centrally – this represents the water supply (i.e., a dam). Using forks, and later spoons, players have to transfer the beans into their cups until the "water line" is reached. The conditions change over several rounds, and as a whole, the exercise serves to initiate conversation around natural asset management, the importance of communication between stakeholders and ways in which systems can be adapted for improved resilience.

Harare, Zimbabwe. "Spilling the beans" is a powerful interactive game that helps participants to better understand the system in which they work and to find ways to make it more efficient, thereby making their cities more resilient.

CASE STUDY 8C   ### CO-ORDINATION IS A MAZE:
A GAME SHOWCASING THE VALUE OF COLLABORATION

Another invaluable capacity-building game used by UNA teams, this exercise emphasises how critical it is for stakeholders to work together to achieve goals. Participants are given a large fabric sheet with a maze painted on it and are asked to position themselves around the sheet and stretch it out between them. Several balls of different shapes and sizes are placed on the fabric in the centre of the maze – these represent different components of a project (e.g., project activities, funding and partnerships). Players then have to collaborate and co-ordinate their actions to successfully manoeuvre the balls around the maze (without touching the lines) to successfully complete the "project". The game gets participants talking about everything from the value of careful planning to the importance of multi-level dialogue and engagement (see Handbook 11).

CASE STUDY 8D   ### IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND FLOW OF INFORMATION THROUGH
ROLE PLAY

A major barrier to co-ordination in African cities is poor communication and insufficient knowledge about how information flows through a system or how to effectively access required information. Role-playing games are a useful way to unpack these challenges and brainstorm solutions. Participants are asked to step into the shoes of a particular actor in the system (e.g., a climate change scientist, city official or national official) and respond to an important message, while seeking required information from other "actors". The process, which can go on for a full day, gives players insight into obstacles blocking communication flow and into the challenges faced by other sectors and departments. It is a fairly simple mechanism for tackling complex issues.

CASE STUDY 8E   ### THE LANGUAGE DIVIDE:
A GAME EXPLORING CONFUSING TERMINOLOGY

While it's often assumed that everyone interprets a particular term in the same way, different people from different disciplines often attribute different meanings to the same phrase. This can be problematic when various actors are collectively implementing a plan or policy, as if their understandings of the problem differ, they'll approach it differently too. UNA teams make use of a simple terminology game to resolve language discrepancies so that stakeholders can streamline their efforts. The aim isn't to attribute one "correct" definition to words, but rather to simply help players to recognise that not everyone interprets common nature-related phrases the same way.

In this exercise, complex umbrella terms, like "biodiversity", "natural assets", "adaptation" and "mitigation" are written on large sheets of paper. A number of related phrases, like "bird species", "wetlands" and "carbon trading", are printed on smaller cards, alongside a few unrelated phrases, too. Players are then asked to align the smaller cards with the overarching themes – to place "wetlands" under "natural assets", for instance. Once placements have been made, the group discusses their choices, and the facilitator cultivates a safe place for reflection, evaluation and the co-creation of knowledge.

Nacala, Mozambique. Not everyone understands climate change terminology the same. Unpacking each other's understanding of these terms leads to more effective engagements as it helps stakeholders understand the framing based on others perspectives

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ABOUT ICLEI AND THE CITIES BIODIVERSITY CENTER

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is a global network of more than 1,750 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development. Active in 100+ countries, ICLEI influences sustainability policy and drives local action for low emission, nature-based, equitable, resilient and circular development. ICLEI's members and team of experts work together through peer exchange, partnerships and capacity building to create systematic change for urban sustainability. ICLEI Africa serves the organisation's African members, working with cities and regions in more than 25 countries across the continent.

ICLEI's Cities Biodiversity Center (CBC), which is located in Cape Town, South Africa, recognises the crucial role that cities and subnational governments play in the pursuit of a sustainable future, through efficiently integrating urban development and biodiversity management at the local level.

Through its programmes, ICLEI CBC seeks local solutions to the complex issues surrounding natural capital and the degradation of ecosystem services in a rapidly urbanising world. ICLEI CBC offers cities across the globe a broad portfolio of supportive services through a dedicated team of passionate, skilled and dynamic biodiversity and urban development experts.