

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

INTRODUCTION

About the UNA considerations handbook series



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS HANDBOOK

The ICLEI Cities Biodiversity Center (CBC), a global centre hosted by ICLEI Africa, developed this series of handbooks to showcase key considerations for integrating urban natural assets into city planning and decision-making processes in sub-Saharan Africa. All insights and learnings profiled were gathered through the design and execution of the Urban Natural Assets for Africa (UNA) programme (see pg. 4), which is currently being implemented in eight cities across six countries.

WHO SHOULD CONSULT THIS HANDBOOK?

The target audience for this handbook series includes the following bodies and professionals:



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)



National government officials (planning, environment, engineers, developers, economists, and finance and procurement disciplines)



Academic researchers (and related organisations)

The series is specifically aimed at public officials and organisations that currently work (or plan to work) in African cities, with an emphasis on those invested in land-use planning, urban greening and urban natural asset restoration and management.

The relevance and significance of this series

The development of this set of handbooks is both timely and significant because:

- Learnings shed light on how African cities are currently responding to global calls to action and working towards the achievement of international biodiversity, climate change and sustainable development goals and targets at the local level (see info box 1)

INFO BOX 1

THE GLOBAL CONTEXT: INTERNATIONAL POLICIES AND AGENDAS

Over the past decade, various international agreements and policies have been developed to encourage city-level action around climate resilience and biodiversity conservation. Key global agreements and policies include:

- The 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets)
- The Paris Agreement
- The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030
- The New Urban Agenda

This handbook series showcases how ICLEI Africa has been working with local and subnational governments in African cities to localise action plans and contribute to the national achievement of the above-mentioned commitments and targets.

Lessons outlined in these booklets are especially timely in as far as the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity is concerned, with the current strategy coming to an end in 2020. As the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Parties and their stakeholders work on developing a post-2020 global biodiversity framework, it's imperative that we both review progress towards targets and share Africa's learnings and insights so these can feed into and inform the new strategy.

- By sharing methods and approaches that have been successfully tailored to African cities, we can support and inform the development of future urban sustainability projects that are both more effective and better suited to the local context.
- With rapid urbanisation and significant ecological change on the horizon, African cities will need to adopt transformative approaches to planning. This handbook series captures how cities have already harnessed opportunities and innovated with positive results, so that best practices can be carried forward into the future.
- Many of the considerations profiled relate to broader mind-set shifts, and therefore aren't only applicable to the realm of natural asset management – they can easily be applied to other sustainability science sub-fields (like eco-mobility and low carbon development) too.
- Learnings showcased here reiterate the importance of developing reflective, needs-driven projects; taking a bottom-up approach to implementation; and focusing on processes (the approach), not just outcomes (the result).

WORKING IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT



To fully benefit from all the learnings outlined in these handbooks, it's important to be familiar with the challenges facing African cities and the realities and opportunities associated with working in this unique context.

The imperative: As the 21st century will bring many challenges, officials and planners in Africa will need to focus their energy on developing sustainable, climate-resilient cities. Central to this task is the safeguarding of biodiversity, as urban natural assets provide a wide range of basic goods and services (see Figure 1) that support the health and well-being of city residents, and of society as a whole. They also afford benefits that help to build a city's resilience to risks associated with climate change.

THE VALUE OF NATURE IN URBAN LIFE

Nature provides many diverse life-supporting and life-enhancing contributions to people in cities and their surrounding regions. These gifts from nature make human life both possible and worth living.



KEY:

- TANGIBLE THINGS FROM NATURE THAT MEET HUMAN NEEDS
- BENEFITS OBTAINED FROM THE PROCESSES THAT REGULATE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
- NATURE'S GIFTS THAT ENRICH OUR LIVES
- SUPPORTING THE LONG-TERM HEALTH OF THE PLANET



FIGURE 1: The Value of Nature in Urban Life

THE REALITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

REALITIES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Africa is one of the fastest urbanising regions in the world – the continent’s urban population is expected to more than triple between 2010 and 2050.¹ • Rapid urban growth threatens local officials’ ability to meet demands and deliver adequate services, especially in resource-constrained environments. • Large portions of African cities are informal and, hence, unplanned. This further complicates service delivery. • Increasingly, pressure is put on the natural asset base to provide much-needed services (see Figure 1). • African communities currently rely heavily on nature and agriculture for livelihood creation, which promotes the unsustainable use of natural assets and encourages rapid land-use change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The African context provides much room for flexibility and innovation – it’s therefore an ideal platform for experimentation and the implementation of novel approaches to service delivery and resilience building. This makes Africa a good base for the testing of new solutions that could potentially have global significance. • Local knowledge and experience can be harnessed to promote entirely different ways of thinking and planning. • Informal systems often naturally foster creativity and innovation. • More so than in many other regions, urban communities in Africa remain deeply connected to and reliant on the natural asset base. This relationship stresses the value of nature and presents clear opportunities for change.



Lilongwe, Malawi. Communities in Africa rely heavily on the services provided by urban rivers, for example, protection from flooding.

THE UNA PROGRAMME AND FLAGSHIP PROJECTS



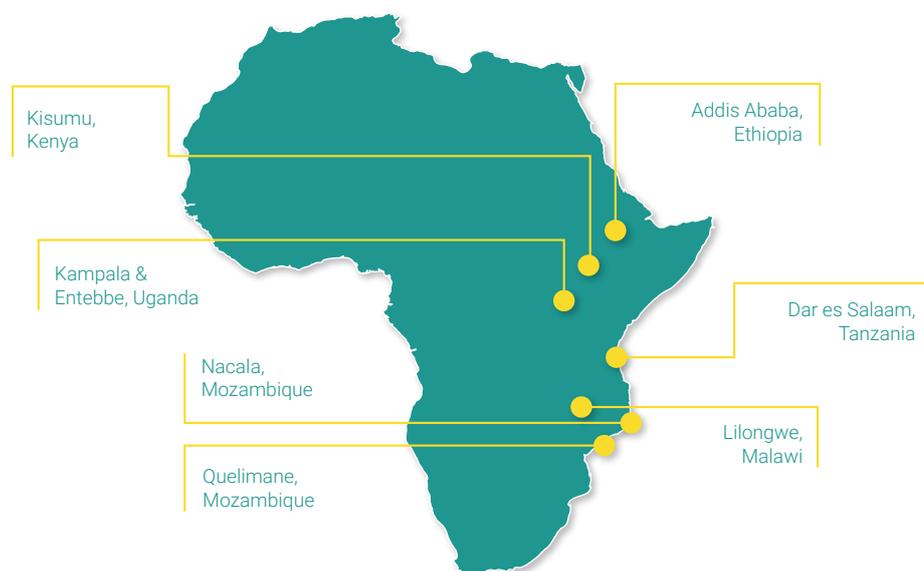
UNA PROGRAMME

Implemented by ICLEI's Cities Biodiversity Center, the UNA programme is designed to support local governments in Africa build climate resilience through addressing the daily challenges they experience around protecting and revitalising their urban natural assets.

It specifically seeks to improve human well-being, contribute to poverty alleviation and build climate resilience through integrating nature-based solutions into land-use planning.

Since the programme's initiation in 2014, three flagship projects have been developed under the UNA umbrella: Urban Natural Assets for Africa (**UNA Africa**), Urban Natural Assets for Africa: Rivers for Life (**UNA Rivers**) and Urban Natural Assets for Africa: Coasts for Life (**UNA Coasts**). Projects share several common overarching objectives. Broadly, they aim to:

- **Support** the exchange and co-production of knowledge through dialogue between important parties in participating cities.
- **Encourage** key stakeholders to co-ordinate activities and work together towards integrating nature-based considerations into land-use planning and decision-making processes.
- **Build capacity** and provide access to a wide variety of informational resources and tools that have been adapted to the African context.
- **Improve** awareness of nature-based solutions through capacity building.
- **Mobilise** project activities through alignment with international policies and processes (such as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals).
- **Connect** local communities with nature to promote appreciation and human well-being.
- **Create and enhance** sustainable livelihoods at the local level. .



All projects are funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) through SwedBio at the Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University.

UNA AFRICA PROJECT

The UNA Africa project was the first initiative implemented under the UNA umbrella (from 2014–2015) and, therefore, inspired the programme name. It took a two-phase approach that centred on **needs assessment and tailor-made capacity building** in various African cities.

Phase 1: Needs assessment consultations: A focus group of city representatives came together in needs assessment workshops to exchange and co-produce knowledge, and to identify constraints and challenges linked to biodiversity, ecosystem services and urban natural asset management.

Phase 2: Tailor-made capacity building: Based on a more thorough understanding of cities' needs, customised training sessions and actionable interventions were developed and implemented in all participating cities to address the constraints, challenges and opportunities identified in the workshops.

Project countries: Ethiopia, Malawi, Tanzania and South Africa



URBAN NATURAL ASSETS FOR AFRICA
Rivers for life

UNA RIVERS PROJECT

Evolving out of UNA Africa, the UNA Rivers project also aims to mainstream nature-based solutions into planning for increased resilience, but with a targeted **focus on cities' river systems**. The initiative seeks to build capacity, improve planning processes and reform policies, while also implementing community-based projects along urban river systems, to support river restoration and promote human well-being.

Project countries: Ethiopia, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda



URBAN NATURAL ASSETS FOR AFRICA
Coasts for life

UNA COASTS PROJECT

Working off a similar framework as UNA Rivers, the UNA Coasts project shifts the focus to urban natural assets situated within **cities' highly dynamic and sensitive coastal zones**. The project aims to improve our understanding of the key challenges and opportunities associated with urban coastal zones, and to design tailor-made coastal natural asset management plans through transdisciplinary stakeholder engagement.

Project countries: Mozambique



HANDBOOK	TOPIC AND TARGET AUDIENCE
<p>HANDBOOK 1</p>	<p>KEY PILLARS OF THE UNA PROGRAMME APPROACH</p> <p>Target audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Funder and donor institutions  Organisations working on sustainability and development issues in Africa
<p>HANDBOOK 2</p>	<p>ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO PLANNING WITH NATURE: Prioritisation mapping in Malawi</p> <p>Target audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  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)
<p>HANDBOOK 3</p>	<p>INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO PLANNING IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT: Urban tinkering in Malawi</p> <p>Target audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  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)
<p>HANDBOOK 4</p>	<p>WORKING WITH FORMAL AND INFORMAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES: ICLEI Africa's learnings</p> <p>Target audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Organisations working on sustainability and development issues in Africa  Academic researchers (and related organisations)

HANDBOOK	TOPIC AND TARGET AUDIENCE
HANDBOOK 5	<p>THE VALUE OF WORKING WITH INFORMALITY: Improving collaboration at informal markets in Malawi</p> <p>Target audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  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)
HANDBOOK 6	<p>INVOLVING COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION: Using creative tools to encourage local participation and action in sub-Saharan Africa</p> <p>Target audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  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)  National government officials (planning, environment, engineers, developers, economists, and finance and procurement disciplines)  Academic researchers (and related organisations)
HANDBOOK 7	<p>THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIP BUILDING: Fostering trust through time investment and innovative interactive exercises</p> <p>Target audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  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)  National government officials (planning, environment, engineers, developers, economists, and finance and procurement disciplines)  Academic researchers (and related organisations)

HANDBOOK	TOPIC AND TARGET AUDIENCE
HANDBOOK 8	<p>CAPACITATING CITIES: Creating spaces for reflection and effective dialogue in sub-Saharan Africa</p> <p>Target audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  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)
HANDBOOK 9	<p>PRIORITISING PROCESSES: Bridging the divide between different sectors and disciplines in sub-Saharan Africa</p> <p>Target audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  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)  National government officials (planning, environment, engineers, developers, economists, and finance and procurement disciplines)  Academic researchers (and related organisations)
HANDBOOK 10	<p>CREATING CHANGE THROUGH ON-THE-GROUND IMPLEMENTATION: Protecting urban natural assets in sub-Saharan Africa</p> <p>Target audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  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)  National government officials (planning, environment, engineers, developers, economists, and finance and procurement disciplines)

HANDBOOK	TOPIC AND TARGET AUDIENCE
<p>HANDBOOK 11</p>	<p>MULTI-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT: Improving national and local working relationships through dialogues in Uganda</p> <p>Target audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  City officials (planning, environment, engineers, developers and related disciplines)  City officials (economists, finance and procurement departments)  National government officials (planning, environment, engineers, developers, economists, and finance and procurement disciplines)

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1. UN, 2014 in Guralp, B. Lwasa, S., Masundire, H., Parnell, S. & Seto, K.C. 2017. Urbanization in Africa: challenges and opportunities for conservation. Environmental Research Letters. 13

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Project Coordinator:
 ICLEI Africa / ICLEI Cities Biodiversity Center (ICLEI CBC)

Authors:
Jessica Kavonic, Professional Officer: ICLEI Africa & ICLEI CBC; *Dr Kate Strachan*, Professional Officer: ICLEI Africa & ICLEI CBC; *Claudia Schröder*, Communications Officer: ICLEI Africa & ICLEI CBC; and *Dayle Kavonic*: Independent Copywriter and Editor

Contributors:
Vanessa Tshite, Intern: ICLEI Africa; *Kirsty Griffin*, Professional Officer: ICLEI Africa; *Tarryn Quayle*, Professional Officer: ICLEI Africa; *Michelle Preen*, Senior Manager, ICLEI Africa; *Dr Meggan Spires*, Senior Manager: ICLEI Africa; and *Dr Julie Goodness*, Postdoctoral researcher, SwedBio.

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ABOUT ICLEI AND THE CITIES BIODIVERSITY CENTER



ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability

ICLEI 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)

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.

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