

ADVANCING INCLUSIVE, RESILIENT, AND PEOPLE-CENTERED URBAN FUTURES

Key facts, messages, and recommendations from the 2025 State of Urbanization in Africa Report

Africa's cities are growing faster than anywhere else in the world, and how this urban transition is managed will shape the continent's future. Urbanization without planning can generate more costs than benefits for the economy, society and environment.

Key facts:



85.8 percent of employment in Africa is informal¹.

Makes up to 92 per cent of employment, leaving most urban workers without access to social protection².



Countries with a speed of urban population growth above 3.5 percent often struggle with access to basic services and face higher poverty and unemployment³.

Local governments suffer from financial, institutional and social capability shortcomings to deal with shocks and crises, and long term stressors⁴.



Four priorities are necessary to harness urbanization to achieve the aspirations of the Second World Summit for Social Development.

Promote inclusive urban economic growth

Advance urban sensitive and universal social protection

Manage urban growth for sustainable outcomes

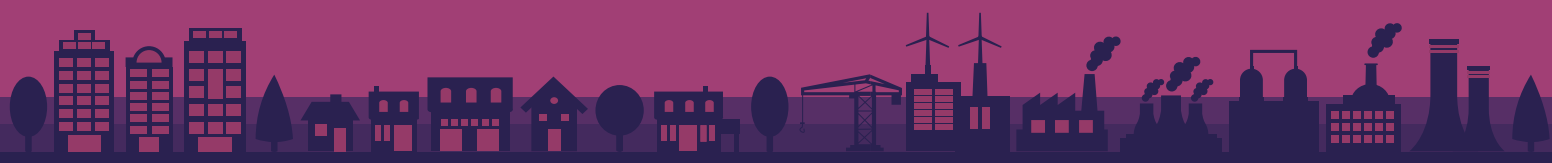
Build adaptive urban governance for multidimensional resilience

¹ UN-Habitat, World Cities Report 2022: Envisaging the Future of Cities (Nairobi, 2022).

² Bonnet, F., Vanek, J., & Chen, M. (2019). Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical brief. Manchester: WIEGO/ILO. Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) and International Labour Organization (ILO).

³ World Bank Open Data. Available at: <https://databank.worldbank.org/>

⁴ UNDRR (2019a), Making Cities Resilient Report 2019: A snapshot of how local governments progress in reducing disaster risks in alignment with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.





Findings:

- 1** Inclusive urban socioeconomic growth needs joined-up action on jobs, infrastructure, spatial planning, and local fiscal space.
- 2** Social protection is piecemeal, modestly funded, and ill-suited to fast-growing informal cities, leaving millions vulnerable and undermining inclusive, resilient urban transitions.
- 3** The pace of urban growth is a critical determinant of socioeconomic development success.
- 4** Urban resilience in Africa is hindered by weak implementation capacity at the local level — including skills shortages, limited institutional coordination, and insufficient transformative place-based investments.



Recommendations:

National and Local leaders should

Invest in labor-intensive sectors, skills, and infrastructure. Strengthen urban-rural linkages. Enable own-source revenue, align national-local planning, and connect cities through targeted spatial and industrial strategies.

Build inclusive urban systems by tailoring universal programs that target urban poverty, health, education and income protections. Extend coverage to informal workers through flexible, easy-to-access schemes linked to local jobs and business support.

Invest in rural infrastructure—such as transport, energy, and digital connectivity—support agro-industrial development. At the same time, promote secondary cities as economic hubs by attracting businesses and industries.

Strengthen network governance and urban competencies to design effective, inclusive, and climate-resilient policies, fostering bottom-up, context-driven solutions and transformative place-based investments for long-term impact.

