



# UN-Habitat Support to Sustainable Urban Development in Kenya

Report on Capacity Building for County Governments  
under the Kenya Municipal Programme

Volume 1: Embu, Kiambu, Machakos, Nakuru and Nyeri counties

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Financed by the Government of Sweden

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## Executive Summary

This is the first report of a series of UN-Habitat reports on *Support to Sustainable Urban Development Sector in Kenya*. The focus of this report is the outcome of UN-Habitat's capacity building training for five county governments and six urban centres under the Kenya Municipal Programme; each of which is currently preparing their Integrated Strategic Urban Development Plan. The county governments are: Embu, Nakuru, Kiambu, Machakos, and Nyeri. The urban centres are: Nakuru, Naivasha, Machakos, Nyeri, Embu and Thika.

The report is structured into five parts. Part One provides background information on the Kenya Municipal Programme and UN-Habitat's involvement. The Kenya Municipal Programme was designed to address the numerous challenges facing the urban sector in Kenya, particularly with the aim to “*strengthen local governance and improve urban services in select urban municipalities*”. Funded by the World Bank and implemented by the Government of Kenya, the Kenya Municipal Programme is structured into four main components. These are: 1) Institutional strengthening; 2) Participatory strategic urban development planning; 3) Investment in infrastructure and service delivery and; 4) Project management, monitoring and evaluation. With funding from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), UN-Habitat has partnered with the Kenya Municipal Programme to support the delivery of component 2 – participatory strategic urban development planning – by building the capacities of county governments to enable them engage more actively with the Kenya Municipal Programme urban planning process. Consequently, UN-Habitat designed training for the county political leaders and policy makers, Members of County Assembly (MCAs), and technical officers drawn from the executive – County Executive Committee members, line department directors, departmental staff etc. This support was

informed by the fact that though Kenya's urban sector is faced with numerous challenges it also exhibits potential for harnessing its transformative power.

The second Part of this report highlights the urbanization context in Kenya: its challenges and opportunities, the relevance of Kenya Vision 2030, the importance of urban-rural linkages, and urban legislation and governance issues. Kenya's urbanization history traces the existence of urban areas to the pre-colonial era. During the colonial period, a number of the current large urban areas were established – including the city of Nairobi. It should be noted that the colonial urbanization policies restricted rural-urban migration; hence, the slow urbanization during that period. However, post-independence Kenya recorded rapid urbanization, mainly as a result of unprecedented rural-urban migration.

This rapid urbanization has been a paradox in Kenya. The country's urban areas are faced with inadequate infrastructure and housing delivery, inadequate urban planning, urban informality, environmental challenges, urban sprawl, urban poverty and urban inequalities. Nevertheless, Kenya's urbanization is predicted to increase significantly. Current projections by UN-Habitat indicate that although by 2050 the country's population will remain largely rural; the urban population in actual numbers will have more than doubled (UN Population Division, 2015). This means that Kenya will undergo significant structural transformations - demographically, socio-economically and spatially. Analyses of Kenya census data between 1962 and 2009 (NCPD, 2013) reveal that small and medium sized towns have grown in number as well as in their percentage share of urban population. Despite the challenges, the significance of urban economies to national income and employment and



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the technological revolution that has stemmed from urban-based economies has been profound, in Kenya.

Yet, despite the importance of this urban reality, most urban areas in Kenya lack sound plans to direct their growth. This is the premise for the need to prioritize urban planning in the country. In addition, Kenya's Vision 2030 identifies urbanization as a vital platform for attaining the targets set for its social, economic and political pillars. This is so because urban areas play a critical role as centres of service provision; centres that create demand for agricultural production; centres of employment; centres that promote import substitution; (hence they promote manufacturing in the country); and centres for enhancing a sustainable hierarchy of human settlements, among other benefits. Furthermore, the strong rural-urban linkages characteristic of Kenya's urbanization cannot be ignored in urban planning policies, both at national and county levels.

The aforementioned benefits of urbanization (and to a large extent of urban planning) are unattainable where effective urban legislation and governance is absent. Kenya promulgated a new Constitution in 2010 which introduced a two tier system of government; the national and the county governments. Under this new dispensation, various functions of urban planning and service provision have been devolved to the county governments, and the national and county governments are mandated to enact various legislations necessary for effective urban planning and governance. Various processes are currently underway, e.g., the review of the Physical Planning Act, the review and implementation of the Urban Areas and Cities Act, and the implementation of the County Government Act. The finalization of the delayed review of the national Building Code is expected to provide legislation governing building standards in the country. The 2010 Constitution also created a National Land Commission, which has already gazetted guidelines for development approval processes in County governments. But there are still gaps with regards to institutional development which remains a major challenge. For example, the creation of "Boards" to manage urban areas, as stipulated by the Urban Areas and Cities Act is yet to be implemented. This has had profound impact on the governance of the defunct municipalities, and overall, the governance of urban areas in Kenya.

Most of the urban areas under the Kenya Municipal Programme are in fact defunct urban municipalities. As outlined in Part Three, with the exception of Naivasha and Thika, the other urban areas now double as the county administrative headquarters, in addition to being key urban areas in those counties and in the country. In common, these towns are characterized by inadequate urban planning, informal settlements, urban sprawl, inadequate and degrading infrastructure, inadequate housing, a growing informal urban economy, and degrading environmental quality. However, the transformative potential possessed by these towns is promising, especially in enhancing socio-economic opportunities for the counties. To harness the benefits of urban growth through the on-going Kenya Municipal programme planning process, county governments will need to develop the requisite adaptive capacities. To help build this capacity, UN-Habitat has engaged Members of County Assembly (Members of County Assembly) and technical officers of the county governments in separate one-day learning sessions in Nairobi, and an additional 2-day rapid planning studio for the technical officers. The sessions have focused on urban planning, urban economy and urban legislation. Part Four of this report details the outcomes of these one-day learning sessions.

## Key Outcomes of the Members of County Assembly Learning Session

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Members of County Assembly were selected for the capacity building they are tasked with legislative and policy making functions, including the formulation of necessary legislation for urban planning and development, for example, for approval of plans, municipal finance, environmental management and infrastructure development. The Learning Sessions emphasized the importance of formulating enabling legislation, for both urban planning and urban development, because without sound urban planning, counties are likely to lose the benefits associated with urban growth. In fact, the failure to plan and implement effectively has profound consequences such as poor urban form (e.g. spatial fragmentation and poor street connectivity), under productivity, and costly infrastructural delivery.

The workshop highlighted the main benefits of urban planning as follows: a) to manage rapid urbanization and urban sprawl; b) improve and enhance urban economies; c) improve land-use management; d) achieve sustainable urban form; e) improve municipal rating and credibility; f) improve preparedness with regard to rural-urban migration; g) and as a tool for enhancing urban resilience. These benefits are attainable through an integrated planning approach such as that pursued by Kenya Municipal Programme. Consequently, the on-going Integrated Strategic Urban Development Planning was acknowledged as an ideal framework for addressing transportation, housing, infrastructure, environment and urban economy issues in the select urban areas. Members of County Assemblies particularly noted the need for an institutional framework to underpin the process, including sound urban governance, where management of urban areas is executed by personnel with the right capacity, backed by political goodwill. On the matter of creating "Boards" as per the provisions of the Urban Areas and Cities Act, it emerged that most of the county assemblies are yet to address the issue. These Boards are tasked with the specific mandate of implementing strategies to enhance Local Economic Development and expand municipal finance. Besides, the Integrated Strategic Urban Development Plans requires these Boards for their implementation and they ought to have been established even before commencement of the planning process, to ensure a solid foundation for plan formulation and implementation.

Urban management in the counties is expected to not only oversee the implementation of the Integrated Strategic Urban Development Plans, but also to deal with increasing urban informality. Members of County Assemblies noted that a paradigm shift in approaches is

## Key Outcomes of the One-Day Learning Session for County Technical Officers

UN-Habitat and the Kenya Municipal Programme also designed a similar session for the county executive. This targeted the relevant line departments – those concerned with urban planning, basic services, environment, urban economy, finance and social development. Universities that train urban planners in Kenya also were involved. Topics similar to those addressed during the Members of County Assembly session were included to enhance a common understanding of urban issues in the counties between the political leaders and technical officers. While Members of County Assembly are tasked with enacting legislation and policies, it is the county executive that is responsible for technical delivery of plans and policies.

During the workshop, county officials identified that unplanned urban growth and urban sprawl challenges are important issues that the on-going Integrated Strategic Urban Development Planning process must adequately address. In addition, the officials stressed the importance of formulating plans whose implementation ensures that urban development is reconciled with environmental conservation and preservation, and particularly agriculture which



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