ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability AFRICA

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# POLICY BRIEF

# URBAN RESILIENCE AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

**Urban Resilience and Local Governance in Tanzania**

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## Background

Rapid urbanisation and population growth in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and Tanzania are straining urban and natural systems, making cities vulnerable to various shocks and stresses. Tanzania, one of the fastest urbanising countries in SSA, had 44.6% of its population living in urban areas by 2020, compared to SSA's average of 43.5%. Building long-term resilience in cities through integrated urban planning frameworks is critical, and to mitigate and prepare for various risks requires visionary and sustainable pro-active governance at the local level. Social connections and the relationship between people and institutions, infrastructure and the environment are crucial to addressing urban resilience. Improving resilience requires cities to adopt a holistic governance approach to urban management, engaging all stakeholders in coordinated efforts to assess capacities and risks, ensuring that the needs of marginalised groups are effectively addressed.

This policy brief presents outcomes of five explorations[1] that unpack how urban planning contributes to urban resilience in Tanzania's main urban areas. These are through the lens of politics and planning, informal settlements, food systems planning, greening cities, and community-led urban waste management.

At its core is the argument that building long-term resilience in cities requires a holistic governance approach that considers the multi-faceted nature of urban challenges across the urban spectrum, and that seeks interconnections between sectors, stakeholders and government mandates.

### Reflections and Policy Recommendations

***Politics and Planning.*** Political actors have shaped and influenced urban planning processes, maintaining power structures that control decision-making. Localised structures and citizens are integral to decision-making and should be integrated in political processes. The intricate relationship between politics and planning however requires addressing conflicting interests.

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1 ICLEI-Africa and KAS Tanzania collaborated with urban practitioners and researchers in Tanzania to develop thought pieces that incorporated research and practice. The thought pieces form the basis of this policy brief.

Recognising the intricate relationship between politics and planning, it is important that physical plans are aligned with political terms and boundaries to ensure political ownership and streamlined implementation. Mainstreaming urban resilience in physical plans is critical to building resilience to urban vulnerabilities such as floods. Physical plans are also a useful tool to address land conflicts. Community participation in the planning process is essential and thus should be enhanced for efficiency and acceptance of physical plans. Urban plans can also be leveraged to generate government revenue for development projects that contribute to building urban resilience.

***Informal settlements in Tanzanian cities.*** Informal settlements in Tanzania house 70-80% of the urban population, representing a clear demonstration of community-driven urbanisations, but posing challenges for long-term planning, environmental protection, and service provision. Government initiatives like settlement regularisation offer opportunities to enhance resilience, but collective governance and innovative mechanisms by both state and non-state actors are essential for greater impact.

Informal settlements are an integral part of the urban fabric, and thus while acknowledging efforts by various actors in building resilience, it is critical to strengthen the government's role as enabler through effective institutional and governance frameworks. This entails planning and providing land and infrastructure, while strengthening regulatory enforcement. Urban resilience must be mainstreamed in policies, legislation and plans and flexible regulations established for informal settlements. Increasing access to secure tenure for residents is essential for empowering communities and strengthening urban resilience. Coordination among sectors and community socio-political structures must be enhanced, and bottom-up approaches and local autonomy prioritised. The co-creation of solutions is key and requires involving Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in community-led planning. Collaboration with local leaders must be pursued as they are important for data collection. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are critical actors, and thus funding to NGOs must be increased and their convening power leveraged to map social capital opportunities. The private sector are strategic actors and thus their investment in informal settlement upgrading initiatives, including innovative financial solutions, must be encouraged to strengthen community resilience efforts.

***Urban Food Systems and Planning.*** The urgent urban food security challenge in Tanzanian cities due to rapid population growth makes urban planning crucial for shaping food environments. There are various opportunities for integrating food systems and planning, and for ensuring multi-scalar food systems planning.

Urban food systems planning is crucial to building resilience and thus requires strengthening through integrating planning strategies to improve food access and

nutrition outcomes. The significant role of small and medium-sized urban centres in shaping food demand and production dynamics must be recognised, and food affordability prioritised in urban food planning initiatives. Street vending plays an integral role in urban food environments and thus requires recognition and regulation as a legitimate form of employment and trading. An enabling environment must be created to protect land for urban and peri-urban agriculture. Strengthening urban food systems also requires building capacities to support multi-stakeholder policy formulation and action planning.

***Greening for Urban Resilience.*** Dodoma's experience underscores the importance of prioritising green infrastructure in urban planning to boost resilience. Green infrastructure helps cities address climate and biodiversity challenges while offering socioeconomic and cultural benefits. Local governments are key to driving these strategies and building resilient communities.

Green infrastructure has proven to be essential to building urban resilience. Therefore, efforts should be made to integrate greening into urban planning for environmental improvement. Prioritising school greening for ecological, educational, and social benefits, linking greening to livelihoods, such as urban agriculture, to alleviate poverty, and raising environmental awareness and empowering communities to manage green spaces are some strategies that can harness wider societal contribution to greening. Greening efforts can also be improved by enhancing inclusive governance and empowering non-state actors to enforce regulations. Private sector involvement must be harnessed to bridge financing gaps and enhance risk-sharing. Greening efforts must also be broadened to include preserving natural flora in ecologically significant areas.

***Community-led waste management.*** Solid waste management is a major challenge of rapid, unplanned urbanization, with the increased volume of unmanaged waste posing public health risks. Approaches that mobilise communities as development partners and stewards of alternative waste management practices have been impactful within informal contexts. In Nipe Fagio’s zero waste approach, two key factors for resilience are waste segregation at source, combined with a social justice approach which benefits communities and supports broader societal goals. This method enabled the registration of Tanzania’s first robust waste cooperative, opening doors for more waste-related cooperatives and waste picker groups.

Effective waste management is vital for resilience, especially in informal contexts. Community-led approaches thrive when integrated with urban systems, support a circular economy, and align with national policies. Systemic waste management problems require systemic solutions that are collective and locally driven, addressing redesign, repurposing, social justice, and job creation. Segregation at source is key to any zero

waste solution whether centralised or decentralised. For decentralised waste management approaches to work, they must recognise the need for community involvement and people's central role. Effective methods include mobilising communities into cooperatives and recognising the critical role of waste pickers. A key entry point to community engagement is understanding their needs and values. Greater collaboration can be achieved through bottom up approaches and purposeful integration with the community, embracing what organically emerges. In the context of varying value propositions, the strengths of different organisations must be recognised and aligned with the elements required to positively transform systems. Thus, partnerships and honest engagement are important.

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