

Development Account Project

Strengthening the capacity of member States to design and implement strategies and policies that promote inclusive, sustainable African cities (2015–2017)

About ECA

The mandate of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is to promote the economic and social development of its 54 member States, foster intraregional integration and encourage international cooperation on the development of Africa. As both a regional arm of the United Nations and a key component of the African institutional landscape, ECA is well positioned to help address the continent's development challenges.

The Urbanization Section within the Social Development Policy Division of ECA supports member States in harnessing the potential of urbanization for accelerated, inclusive growth and structural transformation by generating incisive policy knowledge and enhancing capacity for policy formulation, monitoring and implementation. To that end, the Section helps member States integrate urbanization into national development planning and sectoral policies, as a cross-cutting strategy for growth and transformation across the rural–urban continuum.

Justification

- Evidence from around the world indicates that linking economic development with urban development generates positive interactions and spillovers that improve productivity and well-being. Urbanization in other countries, when planned and managed effectively, has contributed to greater economic dynamism and sustainable poverty reduction. The role of agglomeration economies most clearly demonstrates the linkages between urbanization and development.
- Africa currently has one of the fastest rates of urbanization in the world, and in that respect is comparable to Asia. A few African countries have taken steps to transform urbanization into a source of wealth, reaping social and economic benefits, while managing and reducing negative external factors. To date, however, policy response in most countries has been weak, fragmented and inadequate. Several constraining factors have contributed to the response, including a limited understanding of the potential role of cities in national development, as well as a limited capacity to formulate and implement policies and strategies that use cities as platforms for the inclusive, sustainable structural transformation of Africa.
- To unleash the potential of urbanization, a paradigm shift is required. Cities must be seen as the main drivers of sustainable and inclusive development. Member States need to link cities to the overall goal of structural transformation, including economic growth, economic diversification, competitiveness, productivity, industrialization, agricultural development, innovation, trade, job creation and human development. Cross-sectoral policy responses to harnessing the potential of urbanization are therefore necessary, through the coordinated efforts of the ministries and institutions responsible for national development planning, urban development, housing, industry, trade, finance, agriculture, infrastructure and statistics. This new approach can only be effective within the framework of a

national development plan that lays the groundwork for the long-term changes required to improve living standards.

Objective

The main objective of the project is to strengthen the capacity of African policymakers and experts to effectively design, reformulate and implement strategies and policies for inclusive, sustainable cities, with an initial focus on five countries: Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Morocco, Uganda and Zambia. The project will also facilitate the efforts of member States to implement and monitor the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goal 11, which focuses on making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Drawing on the expertise and mandate of ECA with respect to urbanization in the context of structural transformation, and that of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in the area of sustainable urbanization, the project aims to enhance the knowledge and capacity of policymakers and other stakeholders in the targeted countries for the purposes of integrating urbanization into national development planning processes and frameworks.

Expected results

- Increased awareness and technical knowledge among African policymakers with respect to inclusive, sustainable cities and inclusive urban policies;
- Strengthened capacity of policymakers in targeted African countries to formulate and implement inclusive urban policies.

Methodology

The project will be carried out by a national implementation team, which will gather key information from different sectoral ministries under the leadership of the national development planning institution.

Main activities

- Generation of new knowledge on urbanization and national development planning in five countries;
- Development of tools and methodology to integrate urbanization into national development planning processes and frameworks;
- Capacity-building and training;
- Knowledge exchange and networking among national development planners.

Partners

The Urbanization Section within the Social Development Policy Division of ECA will be mainly responsible for implementing the project, in collaboration with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. It will also network with other United Nations agencies and organizations and with development planning agencies at the national level.