

CONCEPT NOTE

**SUB-NATIONAL URBAN
POLICIES IN AFRICA:
CASES, OPPORTUNITIES AND
CHALLENGES**

June 8, 2022 | 13h EAT



The context

Currently more than half of the population lives in cities, and it is projected that 70% will live in urban areas by 2050 (UN-Habitat, 2014). Africa will be the region of the world with the largest urban population growth, doubling to 950 million additional people (OECD, 2020). SDG 11 aims to make “cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”, and the New Urban Agenda provides a political framework for authorities and society within which local and regional actions can turn the aspirations of SDG 11, as well as many other objectives of other SDGs, into reality for citizens. Thus, the achievement of this Goal and objectives depends on the leadership and commitment of local and regional governments to exercise good governance for sustainable territorial development.

Although the context of the SDGs is global, their achievement depends on local and regional action, therefore, their localization implies counting on sub-national contexts to achieve the 2030 Agenda, as well as prioritizing a bottom-up approach of development, that is, having a strong participation of local and regional governments in the achievement of the SDGs.

Relevance and purpose of Sub-National Urban Policies

The engagement and/or leadership of sub-national governments in urban policy, strategies and agendas, is a necessity as the battle for wholesale socio-economic development will be won or lost in territories and cities. Leadership at the national level, often through a National Urban Policy or Agenda, is often needed in order to define the goals and vision for urbanization for the country. However, due to the complex nature of urban problems, the development and implementation of urban policy at the national level alone would, in most cases, prove unsuccessful for achieving a country’s broad urbanization goals. The cooperation with and empowerment of sub-national governments, therefore, is essential.

Sub-national Urban Policy allows to articulate the relationship between different territorial jurisdictions and to solve challenges that might arise while facilitating effective and efficient public action. The administration of the national territory requires instruments that facilitate and articulate urban management in regions. Subnational Urban Policies function as vehicles that align the actions, strategies and resources of the national agenda towards the lower level -territorial contexts- and vice versa.

Sub-national governments – regions, provinces and/or local authorities – should have an instrumental part in the development of a country's urban development, both through active participation during the development and implementation of a NUP and through the development of complimentary sub-national urban policies (SUP).

A Subnational Urban Policy should be:

An urban management instrument whose objective is to contribute to sustainable territorial development, multi-level governance and territorial decentralization, within the framework of a common ideal of a city for all, led by the sub-national government and built with the participation of society. It incorporates guidelines, strategies, and actions to solve problems and take advantage of urbanization opportunities, improve planning, strengthen governance, and finance the provision of goods and services, depending on the attributes and identity of the regional territory.

Urban policies in the sub-national context facilitate and promote the following aspects:

- Establish integrated and articulated strategies and programmes for territorial development, according to the particularities and identity of the sub-national context, seeking to ensure that their development is socially integrated, environmentally balanced and economically competitive.
- Redefine the relationships between the different territorial jurisdictions that coexist in the sub-national context, promoting dialogue, collaboration and multi-level governance.
- Establish a line of coherence and alignment in urban management that enables institutional reorganization and articulates the actions of various public and private organizations and actors that intervene in the cities that make up the sub-national territory.
- Guide and base the modernization of the normative and regulatory frameworks required to address urban challenges based on experience of the territory and the culture of the use and exploitation of it by citizens.
- Focus and optimize the efficient investment of national and local resources.

In sum, SUP gives sub-national governments the ability to shape the goals and vision for urbanization in their region, in addition to and in conjunction with national level advice on urbanization, such as a NUP. Inclusive policy development is important in all areas of urban policy. It is particularly pertinent for sub-national governments to be actively involved in policy

areas such as infrastructure development and spatial planning, where national level priorities can have physical impacts on sub-national regions (OECD, 2013). It is in the interest of sub-national governments, therefore, to invest in the development of a tool, such as a SUP, which will allow the assessment of capacity at the sub-national level, have provision for the improvement of governance and fiscal systems at the sub-national level and broadly allow sub-national governments to define a vision for urbanization that is beneficial for their region or city.

The diversity of the world's institutional architecture does not allow to propose a unique and useful solution for the definition of a SUP, which adapts to all this complexity. However, it is possible to extract lessons from different realities to share and expand the definition of SUPs.

The state of NUPs and SNUPs in Africa

As the *National Urban Policy: Sub Saharan Africa Report* (UN-Habitat, 2017) points out, “the urban challenges that African nations face range from climate change vulnerability, food insecurity, informal settlements proliferation, and urban poverty, informal activities and settlements, and despite the persistence of these challenges, only 17 out of 44 countries have an explicit NUP as of 2015”. According to the report *Global State of National Urban Policy 2021: Achieving Sustainable Development Goals and Delivering Climate Action* (OECD/UN-HABITAT/UNOPS, 2021), “in Africa, the top three expected outcomes [aim to achieve through NUP] are a coherent vision for national urban development (8 out of 14 responding countries, or 57%), followed by balanced territorial and urban development (7 countries, 50%), and improved basic urban services and infrastructure (6 countries, 43%)”.

This report also stresses that NUP can contribute to implement the global 2030 Agenda and the regional African Union's Africa Agenda 2063, which is “a blueprint and master plan aiming to transform Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Zambia had included the Africa Agenda 2063 in their NUPs, particularly to support the implementation of its goal 4 on modern and liveable habitats in the face of increased urbanisation on the continent”.

In Africa, urban policies at the subnational level do not have many concrete experiences. Although it is true that, in the process towards decentralization, many governments have assumed direct or indirect powers on urban issues, the definition of specific policies and strategies that address urban development have not been prioritized, except for the state of

Niger, in Nigeria, which has been working for several months on a guidance document, and the Autonomous Region of Zanzibar, which has also taken the initial steps for its development. However, subnational urban policies are manifested - not explicitly - through various sectoral policies, strategic plans for territorial development, and structuring projects, which in some way guide the establishment of urban policies from that level.

The event

On the framework of the development of its normative work on Urban Policies, UN-Habitat will celebrate on June 8 the webinar “***Sub-National Urban Policies in Africa: cases, opportunities and challenges***”, with the support of the Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation (ACCD).

This virtual open dialogue will review the role of Sub-national Urban Policies (including sub-national strategies and agendas) in the African context, as a tool to achieve the goals of global urban agendas, and discuss how to redesign urban policy from the perspective of integrated strategies and, at the same time, multi-level governance and decentralisation.

The event will feature the participation of experts from UN-Habitat and several representatives of Sub-national Governments in Africa. It will bring together cases and expertise to share and assess existing subnational urban policies experiences, from definition to implementation, and to propose principles and policy recommendations for the facilitation of international dialogue on the need for, and creation of, the implementation of global agendas throughout the African sub-national government levels.

The panellists will be able to expose, based on recent cases, what has been the relationship between the definition of policies at the subnational level and the advance towards sustainable urbanization. Representatives of regional governments will exchange experiences in the elaboration of policies and plans, in the mechanisms for their implementation, as well as in the relationship between other instruments and other instruments defined at the national and/or local level.

Relevant questions to be addressed during the debate would be:

- *To evaluate the relevance of Sub-national urban policies. Are Sub-national urban policies useful for the implementation of global agendas? How do the SUP fit between*

local and national agendas? Are the subsidiarity and proportionality principles between agendas and policies being met?

- *To exchange international experiences and consolidate implementation methodologies of urban agendas at sub-national scale. How does the governance framework influence in the policies' implementation? Are the policies' implementation enough and well monitored and evaluated?*

DRAFT PROGRAMME

13. 00 | OPENING

- **Oumar Sylla**, Acting Director, Regional Office for Africa, UN-Habitat
- **Carme Gual Via**, Director, Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation

13.15 | INTRODUCTION

- **Remy Sietchiping**, Chief, Policy, Legislation and Governance Section, UN-Habitat

13.30 | PANEL DISCUSSION

- **Daniel Francisco Chapo**, Governador da Província de Inhambane, Mozambique
- **Alexander Flemings Losikiria**, Acting - Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Areas Management, Turkana County, Kenya (TBC).
- **Mduduzi Mbada**, Head of the Policy Unit in the Gauteng Provincial Government, Office of the Premier; Gauteng, South Africa
- **Zubairu Mustapha**, Manager Niger State Urban Support Programme; Niger State Government, Nigeria
- **Muchi Juma Ameir**, Director of the Department of Urban and Rural Planning; Zanzibar, Tanzania (TBC)

Moderation: **Sandra Roque**, UN-Habitat Representative in Mozambique

14.45 | CLOSING REMARKS

- **Carmen Sánchez-Miranda**, Head, Office for Spain, UN-Habitat