

# The State of African Cities 2010

## Governance, Inequality and Urban Land Markets



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Nairobi, November 2010

UN  HABITAT



# Foreword by UN-HABITAT



Events in the early years of the 21st century have all but done away with the widespread belief in linear development, the start of worldwide accumulative growth, and broad access to a global consumer society. The free-market ideology has facilitated a number of serious world-wide mistakes in governance, environmental management, banking practices and food and energy pricing which in recent years have rocked the world to its foundations. The message of these systemic shocks is that we can no longer afford to continue with 'business as usual'. There is need for a significantly higher level of global political determination to make deep changes, if humankind is to survive on this planet.

The world's wealthiest governments have shown that rapid adaptation and reform are possible. Despite the predominance of a free-market ideology opposed to government interference, when faced with a deep financial crisis that imperilled the world's global banking system the governments of the more advanced economies were capable of generating, almost overnight, the political will to put on the table the billions of dollars required to bail out the world's largest financial institutions. These funds did not seem available when they were requested for the global eradication of poverty.

It should be noted, however, that the African banking sector was not as severely hit by the financial crisis as its counterparts in more advanced economies. African banks had behaved with significantly more responsibility and therefore had little exposure to toxic assets and the inevitable consequences of dangerous financial derivatives. Nevertheless, Africa has become exposed to the impacts of the global recession through lower demand for commodities, declining income from tourism and subsequent loss of income and jobs.

However, on the whole, the news from Africa remains good. In 2007 and 2008, the continent's growth rates were on par with China's and India's, while forecasts for 2010 and 2011 suggested a 4.8 per cent pace. Much of this growth is driven by virtually unprecedented political stability and burgeoning domestic demand from Africa's rapidly emerging middle classes. African entrepreneurship has also increased, powered in part by a reversal of the 'brain drain' into a 'brain gain'.

Just as the Asian powerhouses, Africa stands to benefit from the rapid expansion of its cities. Urbanization is jump-starting industrialization and the 40 percent of Africa's population that now lives in cities produces 80 percent of its GDP. However, the continent remains hampered by the difficulties and costs of doing business there. Nevertheless, foreign direct investment is at an all-time high and global business is beginning to outsource manufacturing to Africa.

On the reverse side, as the urbanization of African poverty makes further progress, the prospect of a dignified and productive life continues to elude the poorest among Africans. More and more Africans are forced into informality, whether as a sheer survival strategy or because their living environments are defined by unregulated, non-serviced urban settlements and slums.

Whereas the number of urban slum dwellers has been significantly reduced in Northern Africa over the past two decades, much remains to be done in this respect in sub-Saharan nations. The key to success lies in closing widespread governance gaps by learning from the pragmatism of African civil society. However, the embarrassingly unequal share of the resources, opportunities and benefits of urban life that are reaped by politically and economically privileged elites, on the one hand, and the exclusion of millions upon millions of disenfranchised and deprived urban dwellers, on the other, *must* be addressed if African cities are to continue to play a meaningful role in achieving the targets of the Millennium Development Goals and in providing productive lives for the rapidly growing numbers of urban dwellers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joan Clos', written over a light grey background.

**Joan Clos**  
**Under-Secretary General, United Nations**  
**Executive Director**  
**UN-HABITAT**

# Foreword by UNEP



Poor planning has remained the Achilles heel of many towns, impeding both sustainable growth and healthy living environments for an increasing population of urban dwellers across Africa.

As the world reviews its performance to date on the Millennium Development Goals, and with less than five years to run, evidence shows that effective urban planning and sustainable cities can make a critical contribution.

There is no doubt that decisions made now will have long-term consequences and can lock a city and its dwellers into patterns that may positively or negatively affect urban sustainability and quality of life for generations to come. Inappropriate location of residences and work can generate significant but unnecessary mobility demand, private car dependence, air pollution and traffic congestion. Any future reversal of erroneous spatial decisions in cities can be extremely expensive and difficult.

We know the issues and challenges. Burgeoning city populations with increasing consumption and production patterns overtax limited natural resources and the effects are usually first felt by the ill-equipped urban poor. Urban poverty, in turn, is often accompanied by health and environmental problems related to lack of access to clean water and adequate sanitation.

However, the converse is also true. Effective urban environmental management will provide for and benefit all city dwellers by promoting efficient use of energy in urban mobility options, creating less-polluting fuels, encouraging the uptake of more energy-efficient household appliances and producing less waste.

We cannot separate human lives and livelihoods from both our impact and reliance on the environment. Prudent planning will take this into account.

Climate change is expected to create short- to long-term impacts on urban areas, with increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events such as hurricanes, storm surges and heat waves, as well as semi-permanent or permanent effects such as sea level rise, falling groundwater tables or increased desertification. Climate change will also likely

exacerbate urban problems through voluntary or involuntary eco-migration to Africa's large and intermediate cities away from flood-prone localities. Many African city assets such as ports, arterial railways, road infrastructure and industrial zones may also be under threat. In some cases, important agricultural zones supplying the urban food market may suffer a similar fate.

Around half the world's population is already living in cities and the number look set to rise. The economic and health imperative to plan for and generate sustainable cities is not a luxury, but a necessity of increasing urgency if the 21st century is to provide a secure and sustainable way of life for a world population that over the next four decades will increase in size by a third.

Cities are central in bringing about tomorrow's 'green' economic benefits and welfare, the provision of decent jobs and human well-being within an environment liberated from the risks and threats of climate change, pollution, resource depletion and ecosystem degradation. The quest for sustainability will be increasingly won or lost in our urban areas. With foresight, political will and intelligent planning, cities can be the blueprint and map to a sustainable future.

**Achim Steiner**  
**Under-Secretary General, United Nations**  
**Executive Director**  
**UNEP**



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The report was designed and coordinated by Jos Maseland and Lusungu Kayani, of UN-HABITAT's Regional Office for Africa and the Arab States (ROAAS).

Chapter One was drafted by David Simon and UN-HABITAT staff. The regional chapter on Northern Africa was prepared by Mona Serageldin. Cheikh Gueye, Ousmane Thiam, Babatunde Agbola and Alain Durant-Lasserve drafted the Western Africa chapter. The Eastern Africa chapter was prepared by Alfred Omenya, Paul Syagga and ROAAS staff. The Central Africa chapter was written by Guillaume Iyenda, Alain Durant-Lasserve and ROAAS staff, while Beacon Mbiba and Resetsemang Leduka provided the draft for the Southern Africa chapter. The regional sections on urban land markets were realized through a partnership between Urban LandMark, UN-HABITAT and the Global Land Tool Network and we are grateful to Caroline Wanjiku Kihato and Mark Napier of Urban LandMark. Jay Moor contributed substantive feedback throughout the outline formulation and interim drafting process of the report. The report's Statistical Annex is based on that of the *State of the World's Cities 2010* report, updated with data from *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2009 Revision*, by UN-HABITAT's Global Urban Observatory.

The following also contributed to the report: Johanna Drach, Lisa Junghans and Katharina Rochell.

Thierry Naudin edited the English version of the report and, together with Martin Ebele-Tobbo, translated it into French. UN-HABITAT is grateful for the generous financial support provided by the Government of Norway and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

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“ We shall work to expand the supply of affordable housing by enabling markets to perform efficiently and in a socially and environmentally responsible manner, enhancing access to land and credit and assisting those who are unable to participate in housing markets. ”

PARAGRAPH 9,  
**THE ISTANBUL DECLARATION ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS**, ENDORSED ON 14 JUNE 1996 BY ALL UNITED NATIONS MEMBER STATES AT THE HABITAT II CONFERENCE, ISTANBUL.

Women carrying cargo in the port of Mopti, Mali.  
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# Introduction

*The State of African Cities 2010: Governance, Inequality and Urban Land Markets* report is the second in a series of regional, Africa-focused reports produced by UN-HABITAT. It should preferably be read in conjunction with UN-HABITAT's globally-focused *State of the World's Cities 2010/11* report.

The current report elaborates in greater detail on particular urban processes and themes relevant to Africa, illustrating them with recent data and relevant examples. While much of the scope does focus on cities, no specific settlement size threshold is used and this report addresses urbanization and urban areas in general.

A synthesis of the findings and key messages appears as a separate section after this introduction.

The report is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter introduces key ideas and messages grouped under seven substantive areas: Urban geography, economic growth and human development; Urban inequality; Government or governance?; Public and private urban financing; Local government finance; 10 years of MDGs in Africa; and Africa's largest cities.

The first chapter highlights the importance of understanding cities as human creations, designed to meet human needs and aspirations, rather than just as representing physical concentrations of urban hardware like buildings and infrastructures. Importantly, too, cities operate as parts of wider economic, social and political systems that are more and more tightly integrated across space and political boundaries – nationally, regionally and globally. This provides many new opportunities for human development in the broadest sense, but also unparalleled challenges in terms of sharp inequalities and new vulnerabilities and risks.

Chapters two to six address urban trends and current conditions in Africa, as divided into five broad geographical regions: Northern, Western, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa, respectively. This approach provides more nuanced coverage, highlighting commonalities and differences within and between these African regions. Each of the regional chapters has an identical structure, assessing social geographies, economic geographies, urban land markets, geographies of climate change, and emerging issues. The authorial team has consulted and exchanged successive drafts

to maximize compatibility while attempting to avoid the false impression that the somewhat arbitrary regional divisions somehow have unique or inherent meanings.

For ease of reference, city names have been emphasized with bold italics. Throughout this report, shortened popular country names have been used, i.e. 'Tanzania' rather than 'United Republic of Tanzania'. The exception is South Africa, which is referred to by its long name 'The Republic of Southern Africa' to avoid confusion with 'Southern Africa' which refers to the region.

This report uses the most recent data from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2010) as contained in its publication *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2009 Revision*, CD-ROM Edition - Data in digital form (United Nations, 2009). The shortened form 'WUP 2009' indicates this source throughout the document. However, these statistical data have introduced, by necessity, some discrepancies between regional statistics and the regional country distribution applied for the substantive discussion in this report. Whereas Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe are, for statistical purposes, designated as constituting Eastern African nations in *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2009 Revision*, the current report has grouped these three nations in the Southern African region as they are for the purposes of political and economic grouping more closely associated with the nations of the Southern African than the Eastern African region. Likewise, Angola has been discussed in both the Southern African and Central Africa chapters for the same reasons, whereas for statistical purposes Angola is part of the DESA Central Africa group. It is anticipated that in subsequent versions of this Africa-focused report these discrepancies between regional statistics and substantive groupings will be overcome.

The term 'geography' as used in this report refers not to the academic discipline as such but to spatially evident processes and the resulting patterns or relations. In other words, it includes both static and dynamic elements. Social, economic, political, environmental, developmental and urban relations can be expressed spatially, e.g. social, economic, political geography, etc., while such patterns and processes in turn feed back into the dynamics of these relations.