Towards Africities: Achieving the SDGs through Resilient Intermediate Cities in Africa

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BETTER CITY, BETTER LIFE
Valuing our communities and cities

Background

Rapid urbanization in Africa has resulted in the proliferation of secondary and intermediate cities. The demographic movement from rural to urban areas increases pressure on existing infrastructure. However, if well planned and managed, intermediate cities have a great potential to contribute to both territorial and economic diversity, reduce social inequality and drive innovation.   Intermediate cities can be drivers and enablers of the evolving urban fabric in African countries.

Many African countries have already moved to expanding the devolution process with the adoption of decentralized local government tasked with service delivery, infrastructure development and overseeing planning process. Decentralization has contributed immensely to emerging secondary and intermediate cities as a way to reinforce local democracy and to bring services closers to citizens. However, local governments often face challenges associated with limited financial and budgetary provisions, weak or nonexistent   relevant capacity, lack of political will and overlapping bureaucracies due to lack of institutional clarity in terms of power allocation.

The challenges facing secondary cities have been exacerbated by climate change factors and recently the COVID-19 pandemic that has already severely affected mega and intermediate cities. The majority of recorded COVID-19 cases occurred in urban settings. This calls for a rethink the trajectory of secondary cities especially in Africa for building back better; it has become urgent to take stock of ongoing initiatives to recover from COVID 19 in order to meet the SDGs goals and targets by 2030 and integrating resilience measures.

Secondary and intermediate cities have become attractive hubs of innovation, promoting social cohesion, and attracting migrants and displaced persons from less stable areas (Sahel region, Horn of Africa, Great Lakes Region, North Africa). To harness the value and opportunities and reduce inequality, secondary and intermediate cities need to attract more investments, mitigate the risks of climate change, recover effectively from the economic and social impact of COVID-19 and increase citizen participation.

Kenya will host Africities in 2021 (Africities9), bringing together more than 5000 local governments leaders to reflect on their experiences and existing initiatives in improve public participation, service delivery and in reducing inequalities. Africities9 offers a platform for urban and municipal discussions which will be happening within the unique context of COVID-19 recovery.

The Roundtable

This Roundtable offers a timely opportunity to start building the momentum towards Africities and to collect best practices and innovation that can inform policies and programmes for sustainable secondary and intermediate town since prior discussions have put emphasis mainly on big cities and metropolitan areas

The overall goal of this Roundtable session is to highlight best practices in building resilient secondary cities and towns in response to COVID-19 and crises such as climate change and disasters and look at the challenges and replicable lessons towards strengthening local governance for an effective recovery from COVID-19 in Africa.

Specific Objectives:

Provide a platform for stakeholders to interact and contribute to the global and regional discussions of secondary and intermediate cities

Exchange best practices, ideas and novel solutions in planning and managing resilient secondary and intermediate cities.

Provide a platform for key stakeholders to acquire relevant knowledge on effective planning, mobilizing and financing for urban resilience of secondary and intermediate cities.

Propose activities for strengthening local Government capacity on effective recovery from COVID- 19 in Africa during Africities9

Expected Outcomes:

A deeper understanding amongst panelists and participants on the importance of secondary and intermediate cities.

Advocacy for secondary and intermediate cities and urban resilience in Africa.

Suggestions for formulating an inclusive, evidence-based, forward-thinking urban resilience response in Africa's cities and territories.

Key Outputs:

A final report of the event, including key policy recommendations, will be produced and disseminated among participating institutions, policy makers and key stakeholders.