

## **Building Urban Community Networks for Sustainable Cities in Africa**

### **Project description**

On several occasions, science has reiterated that planet earth is already in the era of the Anthropocene. Anthropocene is a period of accelerated human impacts on the earth's biomes and ecosystems. Urbanisation is one of the human driven processes that have caused massive biophysical changes and social transformation. In 2007, the global urban population crossed the 50% mark of the total population. The phenomenon was a total game-changer on the matrix of the urban socio-ecological system. An urban majority population has since propelled cities to be the hotspots of waste generation, carbon emissions, natural resources consumption and energy demand. In Africa, the average annual urbanisation rate has peaked to 3.3%, hence exhibiting rapid urbanisation of its cities. For example, Nairobi and Kigali cities are expanding at an annual rate of 4.3% and 4% respectively. Theoretically, an urbanisation rate of 4% becomes the tipping point. This is because at the rate, cities are incapable of meeting social, economic and ecological needs of the population- the paralysis scenario. However, currently Africa cities offer opportunities for supporting the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the respective countries. They act as centres for technology and innovations, and human development. They provide business and employment opportunities for youth. For example, Nairobi city generates 40% of the total Kenya's GDP. Hence, to enhance the positive contribution of cities calls for embracing sustainability and transdisciplinary approaches. These approaches guide the urbanisation agenda that deal with the complexity of optimizing opportunities on the one hand, and addressing challenges of urbanisation on the other hand. Notably, African cities face three key challenges: ecological degradation, poverty and pollution. To systematically tackle these challenges, a consortium of eight multidisciplinary experts conceptualized the ***"Building Urban Community Networks for Sustainable cities in Africa"*** (UComNetSus) project. The project aims to develop novel networks and communities of practice that address the inter-linkages, synergies, and trade-offs among social, economic and ecological needs of city residents. Lagos, Kigali, Kumasi, Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and Mombasa are the cities selected for the implementation of UComNetSus. The project will answer the following questions: (1) To what extent can networks of urban stakeholders bring about cross-learning and adoption of best practices? (2) What are the social, economic and ecological challenges and interdependencies for sustainability of African cities? (3) How can we build interdependencies and synergies among stakeholder networks for addressing reported challenges? (4) Which social, economic and ecological assets do African cities have and how are they distributed in space and time in these cities? (5) Which guidelines can be put in place to foster sustainability of African cities? In order to answer the questions, the consortium plans to; form urban social hubs to mobilise stakeholders, conduct consultative stakeholder workshops, map social, economic and ecological assets, and conduct SWOT and in-depth policy analyses. Results from the project will generate new lessons and pathways through which win-win solutions will prevail amidst competing demands from urban communities, while safeguarding the ecological integrity within the cities.

### List of partner organisations in the UComNetSus project

Sr.	Org. Name	Organisation Type	City	Country
1.	Georgetown University	Academic, Training and Research	Washington	USA
2.	Kenyatta University	Academic, Training and Research	Nairobi	Kenya
3.	Kwame Nkruma University of Science and Technology	Academic, Training and Research	Kumasi	Ghana
4.	Nature Cares Resource Centre	Regional NGO	Lagos	Nigeria
5.	South Eastern Kenya University	Academic, Training and Research	Kitui	Kenya
6.	University of Dar es Salaam	Academic, Training and Research	Dar es Salaam	Tanzania
7.	University of Embu	Academic, Training and Research	Embu	Kenya
8.	University of Rwanda	Academic, Training and Research	Kigali	Rwanda

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