

# Regional Assessment

on Urban Vulnerability and Resilience  
in Southern African Development  
Community Member States

Strengthening Capacities for Reducing Urban Vulnerability  
and Building Resilience in Southern Africa



---

The report was made possible and prepared in the context of the Building Disaster Resilience to Natural Hazards in Sub-Saharan African Regions, Countries and Communities Program, which is an initiative of the Organization of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), financed by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the World Bank and Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR).

This report was prepared by UN-Habitat with technical and financial contributions from World Bank and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) (“contributing partners”). The findings, analysis and conclusions expressed in this report do not reflect the views of UN-Habitat, the World Bank, its Board of Directors, the governments they represent or any of its partner organizations. Although UN-Habitat and contributing partners World Bank and GFDRR have made all efforts to ensure that the information in this report is correct, its accuracy cannot be guaranteed. Use of any data or information from this report is at the user’s risk. UN-Habitat, the World Bank, GFDRR or any of its partners shall not be liable for any loss, damage, liability, or expense because of use of data contained in this document. The boundaries, colours, denomination, and other information shown in any map in this work do not imply any judgment on the part of the UN-Habitat, the World Bank, GFDRR and partners concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries.



Building Disaster  
Resilience in  
Sub-Saharan Africa



An initiative of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States funded by the European Union

Implemented by:



**GFDRR**  
Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery



**WORLD BANK GROUP**

# Regional Assessment

on Urban Vulnerability and Resilience  
in Southern African Development  
Community Member States

Strengthening Capacities for Reducing Urban Vulnerability  
and Building Resilience in Southern Africa



**DiMSUR**  
Disaster Risk Management,  
Sustainability and Urban Resilience



**UN HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

Copyright © United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) 2022

All rights reserved.

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

P.O. Box 30030 00100 Nairobi GPO Kenya

HS Number: HS/047/21E

ISBN Number: 978-92-1-132889-9

## Acknowledgements

This report, *Regional Assessment on Urban Vulnerability and Resilience in Southern African Development Community Member States* is a deliverable of the consulting assignment Strengthening Capacities for Reducing Urban Vulnerability and Building Resilience in Southern Africa carried out by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in association with the Technical Centre for Disaster Risk Management, Sustainability and Urban Resilience (DiMSUR) for Southern Africa.

The consulting assignment is part of the Building Disaster Resilience to Natural Hazards in Sub-Saharan African Regions, Countries and Communities programme financed by the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States–European Union (ACP–EU) through its 10th European Development Fund Programme result area 2, managed by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery/World Bank. The programme supports four Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in sub-Saharan Africa, including the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, towards establishing Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) coordination, planning and policy advisory capacities with a view to supporting the respective domestic, sub-regional and regional programmes of the RECs Member States. The SADC DRR Capacity Enhancement Project (2018–2019) supports the SADC region through an ACP–EU National DRR programme to implement its Disaster Risk Reduction Strategic Plan. One of the aims of this plan is to enhance capacity among SADC states to design urban vulnerability and resilience initiatives.

**Overall coordination:** Mathias Spaliviero, Fruzsina Straus, Selene Angelone.

**Contributors:** Mathias Spaliviero, Fruzsina Straus, Selene Angelone, Ammar Ismail, Stern Kita, Alexander Chileshe, Arianna Francioni, Linda Zardo, Katharina Rochell, Pauli Voipio, Annamaria De Lilla, Marcia Guambe, Dyson Jangia, Julia de Faria, Marcella Guarneri, Prashant Singh, Sergio de Cosmo, Carl Dingel, Thembi Kumapley, Luis Corrales, Elena Sentieri, Luciana Cardoso, Sithembiso Gina, Isabel Wetzel.

**Editors:** Stephanie Briggs, Jos Maseland.

**Illustrations, schemes and maps:** UN-Habitat Urban LAB, Javier Torner, Clara Alonso, Arianna Francioni, Ammar Ismail, Pauli Voipio, Selene Angelone.

**Cover illustration:** Ammar Ismail.

**Design and layout:** Fredrick Maitaria.

## Disclaimer

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries regarding its economic system or degree of development. Excerpts may be reproduced without authorisation, on condition that the source is indicated.

Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the United Nations and its member states.

[www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)

# Foreword

## Foreword

**In a world increasingly subject to interconnected and often devastating covariate shocks, rapid urbanization is a trend which shows no signs of desisting. This is no truer than in sub-Saharan Africa; the area expected to witness unprecedented movements of people from rural areas to cities.**



Amongst the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Member States are urbanising at a particularly fast rate. The region encompasses 16 Southern African countries, housing a diverse consortium of vibrant market towns, rural communities, intermediate cities and metropolises, with tremendous opportunities for green economic growth and innovation.

Despite such potential, SADC faces threats from a variety of extreme natural hazards; floods, droughts, cyclones and earthquakes, made more frequent and severe by the growing impact of climate change. In combination with rapid urban expansion, most of which is unplanned, many of the most vulnerable are forced to settle informally in hazard prone areas. With limited resources to manage the threat of disasters or provide basic services, these settlements are sites of concentrated risk. As such, reducing urban vulnerability and building resilience to a wide range of shocks in Southern Africa is central to ensuring sustainable urban development in the region.

When we think about the future of rural, peri-urban and urban environments, cities must be at the forefront of mitigating and adapting to climate change. Contrary to static and consensual assumptions of the region, many steps have been taken by member

states and the Secretariat in recent years to jointly address SADC's disaster risk profile. However, as the inevitable force of climate change becomes increasingly apparent, a more proactive, holistic and integrated approach is necessary to prevent and manage urban crises. Strong governance and comprehensive measures including those which enhance cities preparedness and response capacity, as well as their ability to adapt is key as we consider new and innovative pathways towards zero-carbon development.

Taking account of such challenges, this publication *Regional Assessment on Urban Vulnerability and Resilience in Southern African Development Community Member States* responds to the complexity and dynamism that SADC Member States face and provides the basis for a much-needed Urban Resilience Framework. It includes an examination of urban disaster risk and resilience in the region, vulnerability profiles of each country, city level analyses of vulnerability, and measures to foster institutional and policy discussions.

This supports a number of UN-Habitat's Flagship Initiatives, including "Resilient Settlements for the Urban Poor" and "Sustainable Development Goals Cities",

and builds on a long history of strong collaboration and partnership between UN-Habitat, DiMSUR and SADC Secretariat, underlining the emergency response-development nexus and the importance of an urban perspective in disaster risk management and climate change adaptation.

In view of the 2030 Agenda and the fact that sustainable development increasingly depends on the management of urban growth, I hope policymakers and practitioners from each respective National Disaster Management Authority, as well as the SADC DRR Unit, will benefit from these practical insights, to both improve the current package of policies, strategies and plans of action in the region, and to capitalise on the potential this community so holds.

**Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif**  
Under-Secretary-General and  
Executive Director, United Nations  
Human Settlements Programme  
(UN-Habitat)

## Executive Summary

Africa is undergoing rapid urbanization with the total share of the urban population projected to increase to 60 per cent by 2050 from the current 40 per cent. This trend can also be observed in the region represented by the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In fact, SADC's 16 Member States<sup>1</sup> are among the world's fastest urbanizing countries. Due to a lack of local capacity and financial means to manage this rapid urban growth, much of the urban expansion has been taking place outside or in the absence of formal planning frameworks. As a result, the region has experienced a sprawl of urban settlements characterized by high vulnerability and high risk due to poor living conditions with a lack of basic and social services.

A striking aspect of urbanization in the region is the dichotomy of city-size. Only 11 urban settlements have a population exceeding 2 million, hosting around 40 per cent of the total urban population. At the same time around 60 per cent of the urban settlements in the region have less than 30,000 inhabitants. It is important therefore to keep in mind that megacities and small cities have different spatial, administrative and socio-economic features. They also have differentiated needs and opportunities when it comes to addressing disaster risk and adapting to climate change. In fact, given the trend of expanding secondary cities of smaller size and the socio-economic benefits that come with encouraging population movements away from primary towards secondary cities, these cities actually hold the key to building urban resilience in the SADC region.

The SADC region is highly susceptible to the impact of extreme climate events in particular floods, droughts, cyclones and earthquakes. Urban risks are frequently exacerbated by the increasing unpredictability and severity of such events due to the influence of climate change affecting a range of urban sectors including water, food supply systems and health. People with low incomes, women and girls, youth, the elderly, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups tend to be particularly vulnerable and often disproportionately affected.

For this and the aforementioned reasons, urban resilience is an area that requires critical attention and its integration in current SADC policies and programmes is essential.

Although the SADC Member States have very diverse economies, some of the countries are among the world's least developed. The region continues to suffer from high unemployment, weak commodity prices, chronic fuel and food shortages, fiscal strains, increasing debt and high inflation. The COVID-19 crisis is already leading to additional economic losses. Gender inequality in the labour markets and gender-related issues remain a serious concern.

It is important to highlight that hazards and vulnerabilities faced by urban areas in the region transcend national boundaries and are shared by multiple countries such as: cities in the drought-prone semi-arid and sub-humid areas that cover parts of Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe; cities along the cyclone threatened south-eastern coast of the Indian Ocean in Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and the Indian Ocean islands; cities falling into the disaster-prone areas in the Zambezi River basin; and cities of the Great Rift Valley in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania. Therefore, since several countries could simultaneously be in a state of emergency putting a strain on relief efforts, shared knowledge and cooperation among countries – so that SADC Member States can learn from one another, support each other and coordinate appropriate actions – could make a significant difference when it comes to disaster risk preparedness.

Taking a regional approach to building urban resilience and establishing effective multi-jurisdictional coordination mechanisms is critical amongst the SADC Member States, particularly in areas with high levels of urbanization. Nevertheless, it must be considered that each country and sub-region in the SADC presents a high level of complexity due to their susceptibility to more than one hazard and other underlying vulnerabilities. Even when disaster risk management (DRM) measures are in place the focus

**“The SADC region is highly susceptible to the impact of extreme climate events in particular floods, droughts, cyclones and earthquakes.**

**“The challenges faced by each government in tackling multiple hazards domestically also have an impact on their ability to contribute to joint, sub-regional and regional efforts. SADC governments are, in fact, still suffering substantial gaps between their global/regional commitments and national needs on the one hand, and their capacities on the other.**

<sup>1</sup> SADC Member States: Angola, Botswana, the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe. Source: <https://www.sadc.int/member-states>

tends to be on emergency relief and response despite the fact that mitigation and prevention measures are more effective for achieving long-term resilience.

Improved governance is a crucial element to increasing coping capacities and as a consequence to decreasing the vulnerability of exposed populations. The challenges faced by each government in tackling multiple hazards domestically also have an impact on their ability to contribute to joint, sub-regional and regional efforts. SADC governments are, in fact, still suffering substantial gaps between their global/regional commitments and national needs on the one hand, and their capacities on the other.

The absence of regeneration and updating of priorities is visible in the lack of an urban focus in DRM. SADC cities face multiple challenges and therefore have different levels of vulnerability, and such vulnerabilities are the result of many interconnected factors which refer to both the physical and socio-economic spheres.

While some settlements can be more vulnerable than others because of particularly challenging threats – due to their specific location for example – for other cities vulnerabilities can be more hidden in the folds of the urban structure such as spatial inequalities and uneven access to services and opportunities. Moreover, all urban vulnerabilities must be considered against the broader context. In fact, even when sharing the same threats and similar weaknesses, the consequences of a common event can have different implications depending on the specific dynamics of a city, some going so far as to have repercussions beyond the city's and even the country's boundaries.

Understanding the context of these cities should go hand-in-hand with the investigation on how these cities are addressing such challenges, what kind of expertise and good practices they have developed, and which home-grown solutions can be exchanged with cities of similar profiles or shared hazards. This kind of South-South urban learning and exchange is critical to ensuring that localized, context-specific, indigenous and innovative climate change adaptation (CCA), disaster preparedness and response, and resilience building interventions are captured and replicated across the SADC region.

Strategies targeting both the physical and the socio-economic sphere are therefore required to

effectively tackle urban vulnerabilities, but they must be supported by an overall well-functioning institutional set-up. To be effective, laws and regulations must be developed and enforced at the local level but should also refer to national and regional frameworks, where they exist. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) has become an important topic on the SADC agenda as shown by the increasing number of dedicated strategies and policy frameworks for, or related to, DRR and resilience and CCA/mitigation. Although at the regional level the SADC Regional Resilience Framework 2020–2030 has been developed and clearly mentions sustainable urban centres as one of its priorities, in general, the urban dimension of disasters is still not sufficiently reflected in the overall package of regional policies, strategies and plans of action. Clearly, as it occurs in most sub-Saharan African countries, urbanization is not yet seen as an opportunity for achieving structural transformation.

At the national level despite many SADC Member States having developed national resilience strategies, in general they are not yet able to establish and implement strategies that can promote urban development processes that ensure climate and disaster resilience and more balanced socio-economic dynamics. This aspect, paired with an urbanization pace which is so fast that it becomes highly difficult to manage, leads to the SADC and its Member States still being far from fully prepared to prevent and manage urban crises.

Drawing on the overall research conducted for this assessment, final conclusions and recommendations have been compiled and grouped into six thematic sets as follows:

→ **Enhancing policy, legislation and institutional frameworks with a stronger urban focus**

Along with a policy shift from disaster response to a more proactive, holistic and integrated DRM approach, the strengthening of the emergency response-development nexus and the integration of an urban perspective in DRM and CCA strategies is crucial. SADC institutional capacity and DRM coordination could be strengthened through better alignment of related strategies and plans at the different administrative levels and the establishment and/or strengthening of multi-jurisdictional coordination mechanisms.

“ Although the SADC Member States have very diverse economies, some of the countries are among the world's least developed. The region continues to suffer from high unemployment, weak commodity prices, chronic fuel and food shortages, fiscal strains, increasing debt and high inflation.

“To be sustainable, cities are supposed to provide decent job opportunities and/or regular sources of income, especially targeting youth and the low-income class..”

“To reinforce the system of cities, delocalizing some socio-economic functions of primary cities to secondary and tertiary cities could help to reduce migration of the rural youth towards the capital cities.”

→ **Capacity building, knowledge and information management**

Improving disaster risk preparedness/responses and urban resilience is essential and could be done by gradually integrating age-appropriate educational messages into formal curricula and non-formal educational and training initiatives. With this purpose, both academic institutions and the private sector can play an important role in supporting national and local governments.

The development of a regional body of knowledge and expertise to tackle urban risks and to identify and implement concrete solutions is urgently needed. The data gap on disaster risks in urban areas calls for comprehensive multi-hazard risk assessments in urban areas, improved data collection mechanisms, harmonization of methodologies between hazards and risks research institutions, and more data sharing across institutional and political boundaries.

→ **Strengthening regional and national urban planning for building resilience**

Spatial planning efforts for enhancing urban resilience should neither be restricted to city boundaries nor to current scenarios. Urban plans need to be prepared in a participatory manner – including vulnerable groups in DRM planning and decision-making processes – to harness local knowledge and ensure community ownership while embracing a long-term vision of city development that takes into consideration the projected impacts of climate variability and change. To reinforce the system of cities, delocalizing some socio-economic functions of primary cities to secondary and tertiary cities could help to reduce migration of the rural youth

SADC region in order to move away from the funding dependency on external partners for supporting policy, institutional capacity and programme development and implementation. Several countries have developed disaster risk financing strategies while a few others have different forms of financing mechanisms in their legislation or policies, and the operationalization of these instruments is essential. To be sustainable, cities are supposed to provide decent job opportunities and/or regular sources of income, especially targeting youth and the low-income class. Therefore, addressing informality requires developing pro-poor urban policy frameworks that enable not just physical upgrading but especially socio-economic upgrading by creating better income opportunities for low-income groups.

→ **Promoting durable urban solutions**

There is a need to promote nature-based solutions for urban climate adaptation and DRR, and to provide architectural and engineering climate-proof designs, options and solutions that fit a variety of requirements and local contexts. Shifting to a green economic model can provide an opportunity to innovate, diversify and create employment while better adapting to climate change at the same time. Ensuring access to and continuity of infrastructure and basic services, even in times of disaster, is crucial to meet the vital needs of urban populations and to allow a city to keep functioning.

→ **Strengthened inter-country and inter-city cooperation**

Increased collaboration among countries is absolutely essential to mitigate transboundary/

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

[https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/云报告?reportId=5\\_31086](https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/云报告?reportId=5_31086)

