

Evidence and good practice to inspire action

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What governments
and decision makers can do
to retain, protect and enable people
that walk and cycle in Africa





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Walking and Cycling in Africa – Evidence and Good
Practice to Inspire Action

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Glossary

This glossary is compiled according to the lead authors of the report drawing on glossaries and other resources available on the websites of leading organizations, networks and projects.

Carbon dioxide (CO₂): One of the main products of fuel combustion in vehicle engines. CO₂ is the most significant GHG influencing climate change.

Carbon monoxide (CO): Occurs when the carbon in fuel is only partially oxidised, forming CO and not CO₂. It is highly toxic.

Global Burden of Disease (GBD): The Global Burden of Disease (GBD) provides a tool to quantify health loss from diseases, injuries, and risk factors. GBD research incorporates both the prevalence of a given disease or risk factor and the relative harm it causes. Collection of the data is led by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington, Seattle (USA).

Greenhouse gases (GHG): The atmospheric gases responsible for causing global warming and climatic change. The major greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O). Less prevalent, but very powerful, GHGs are hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆).

Hydrocarbons (HCs): Produced from either incomplete or partial combustion. This organic compound is closely linked to traffic pollution and is toxic to human health.

Isochrone map: Often used in urban planning, it depicts the area accessible from a point within a certain time threshold. An isochrone (iso = equal, chrone = time).

Mitigation: In the context of climate change, a human intervention to reduce the sources, or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases. Examples include using fossil fuels more efficiently for industrial processes or electricity generation, switching to solar energy or wind power, improving the insulation of buildings, focusing on zero emission transport and expanding forests and other 'sinks' to remove greater amounts of CO₂ from the atmosphere.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC): Submissions by countries that have ratified the Paris Agreement which presents their national efforts to reach the Paris Agreement's long-term temperature goal of limiting warming to well below 2°C. New or updated nationally determined contributions (NDC) are to be submitted in 2025 and every five years thereafter. NDCs thus represent a country's current ambition/target for reducing emissions nationally.

Nitrogen oxides (NOX): A group of chemicals that are all formed by the reaction of nitrogen. NOX emissions lead to the formation of PM and causes harm to the environment by contributing to the acidification and eutrophication of waters and soils.

Non-Motorized Transport (NMT): includes all forms of travel that do not rely on an engine or motor for movement. This includes walking and cycling and variants thereof

such as small-wheeled transport (skates, skateboards, push scooters and hand carts) and wheelchair travel.

Particulate matter (PM): A form of air pollution. PM is one of the most important pollutants, as it can cause or aggravate cardiovascular and lung diseases and cancers.

Share the Road: The initiative led by UNEP to advance investment in walking and cycling infrastructure to ensure benefits for road safety, accessibility and the environment.

Short Lived Climate Pollutant: Short-lived climate pollutants are powerful climate forcers that remain in the atmosphere for a much shorter period of time than carbon dioxide (CO₂), yet their potential to warm the atmosphere can be many times greater. Certain short-lived climate pollutants are also dangerous air pollutants that have harmful effects for people, ecosystems and agricultural productivity.

Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP): A strategic planning instrument for local authorities that is used to foster the development and integration of all transport modes while encouraging a shift towards more sustainable modes of transport. A SUMP aims to address urban transport problems and contribute to reaching local and higher-level objectives for environmental, social, and economic development.

Organizational Statements

UN Environment Programme

Although the African continent is among those least responsible for climate change, rapid urbanization and increasing levels of car ownership put the continent at risk of becoming one of the larger emitters. There have been massive increases in ambient air pollution across Africa. In the absence of deliberate intervention, this pollution will increase morbidity and mortality, diminish economic productivity, impair potential human capital, and undercut development.

Transportation is one of the largest sources of air pollution. According to a UNEP report on Air Pollution and Development in Africa, in 2019 air pollution was responsible for 1.1 million deaths across the region.

Most African countries are still early in development. Investing in scalable solutions and minimising pollution is paramount. In Africa, where there is an incredibly high modal share in walking and cycling, decarbonization of the transport sector means retaining and enabling people to move safely in their cities by foot or bicycle.

There has been a shift in focus since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The disruption significantly changed people's perceptions of the value of walking and cycling. Indeed, incredible shifts in policy across the continent in favour of walking and cycling have been observed. This is inspiring and shows a remarkable willingness to take action, but there is a lot more to be done.

This report highlights that nearly zero-emission modes of transport, walking and cycling infrastructure are a multi-solution intervention for the environment, for our cities and for our health. With walking and cycling at the centre of transport planning we can ensure the conditions for a greener, more inclusive and more connected African future.



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