



## **Report on urbanization data and statistics in Africa**

### **I. Introduction**

1. The importance of urbanization as a driver for inclusive growth in Africa is now well recognized. The African Union's Agenda 2063, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (i.e. Sustainable Development Goals) and the Common African Position towards the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development all emphasize the role of urbanization in Africa's transformation. At the national level, progress has been made by African countries in developing policies and strategies that would harness the urbanization process for development. As such, urbanization-related targets are required, informed by robust data and statistics for the monitoring and implementation of related policies and strategies.

2. A key objective of the urbanization programme of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is to support member States in strengthening their urbanization data and help them with their statistics needs for effective policy formulation, implementation and monitoring. The experience varies across the countries on the continent, depending on national government priorities, geared toward strengthening the production, processing and analysis of urbanization data over a long period of time.

3. To this end, an assessment on urban data and statistics in Africa was conducted by ECA which was reviewed by a core group of representatives from national statistics offices in Africa. A recommendation was then made to table urbanization data and statistics as an emerging area for endorsement by the Statistical Commission for Africa. The present report is therefore a summary of the findings from the assessment and issues for consideration in developing the African Programme on Urbanization Data and Statistics.

### **II. Summary findings from the assessment of urbanization data and statistics in Africa**

4. The assessment was initially done to: understand the relevant indicators of urbanization that African countries have produced over the past years; assess the quality of these indicators; identify gaps in indicators that are not currently produced yet desirable, especially in the implementation of goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals (Sustainable Cities and Communities); assess

the extent to which the indicators produced in Africa can monitor progress in incorporating urban statistics in overall national development planning; and evaluate Africa's experience of producing relevant indicators in the recommendations of the 2020 population census round for collection, processing and analysis of urban dynamics.

5. The assessment was also conducted to guide member States in collecting and analysing urban statistics within the framework of Africa's priorities and vision, Agenda 2063, the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda. The assessment provided a critical review of available data on urban areas, urbanization dynamics, the different sources of data, and recommendations that would improve the collection, measurement and dissemination of indices on major dimensions of urbanization. Some examples of this include standardization of urban definitions and concepts, and improving data collection of urbanization indicators by concentrating on selected indicators, including adding indicators where there are gaps.

6. The assessment revealed the need to clearly and accurately define what a city, town or rural area in Africa is, in order to collect and tabulate data on urban areas. Secondly, the measurement of urbanization should not be limited to the static (a specific point in time which is mostly taken as the census date of reference), but also the dynamic measures. Consensus will be needed from all stakeholders on the choice of the appropriate methods of measuring these indices and metrics to allow observation, quantification and assessment of the urbanization process across space and over time. Thirdly, there is a need to describe the conditions under which urban dwellers live in urban areas during the production of data.

7. Although variations across countries must be recognized in the definitions of "urban", the results of assessment proposed a number of measures of urbanization levels that are available and which can be used to carry out international comparisons, and the importance of the Geographical Information System in the production of much-needed spatial data in understanding the urbanization phenomenon.

8. Addressing the existing gaps effectively would require a harmonized regional urban statistics programme guided by the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa and under the direction of the Statistical Commission for Africa. The programme would also contribute to the work of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and to efforts to enhance the round of censuses, including the Revision of the Africa Addendum to the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses.

### **III. Strategy for the African Programme on Urbanization Data and Statistics**

#### **A. African Programme on Urbanization Data and Statistics**

9. The African Programme on Urbanization Data and Statistics would aim to advance comprehensive, comparable and reliable information for evidence-based policies and strategies to promote sustainable cities and human settlements as drivers of inclusive growth and transformation. It would thus seek to strengthen the capacity of national statistical systems to collect, compile and analyse urban statistics through a coordinated regional approach. Such a programme could include the following entry points:

(a) A working group on urban statistics under the Statistical Commission for Africa to guide the implementation of the urban statistics programme;

- (b) A comprehensive review of national urban statistics to further deepen the understanding of the key gaps and opportunities;
- (c) A handbook on urban statistics based on the review of national urban statistics to guide member States in collecting and analysing urban data in line with reporting on regional and global commitments;
- (d) Urban statistics capacity-building to enhance national production and harmonization of urban statistics, and enable regional comparability;
- (e) An urban statistics network to facilitate exchange and learning between national and regional statistical experts, institutions and related stakeholders.

## **B. Regional working group on urbanization data and statistics**

10. A core group would be set up to coordinate the implementation of the African Programme on Urbanization Data and Statistics. The member institutions of the African Group are:

- (a) The three pan-African institutions: ECA, the African Development Bank and the African Union Commission;
- (b) United Nations organizations including: ECA (serving as secretariat); the United Nations Human Settlement Programme; the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; the United Nations Population Fund; the United Nations Children's Fund; the United Nations Environment Programme; the United Nations Development Programme; and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization;
- (c) Statistical training centres;
- (d) Regional economic communities; and
- (e) Member States.

11. The working group's specific objectives as articulated in the terms of reference of the group would be as follows:

- (a) Promote mainstreaming of urbanization statistics into national statistical systems and in national planning mechanisms;
- (b) Promote coordination of initiatives and activities on urban data and statistics;
- (c) Coordinate the implementation of activities of the African Programme on Urbanization Data and Statistics; and
- (d) Promote the exchange of experiences and foster best practices on gender statistics.

## **IV. Plan of action**

12. The Commission is therefore invited to consider the following actions:

- (a) Endorse the proposal of the establishment of the African Programme on Urbanization Data and Statistics based on the assessment report on urbanization data and statistics in Africa;
- (b) Agree with the proposed country membership of the Programme. Additional organizations and institutions will be invited to be part of the membership; and

(c) Accept the proposal that the proposed African Programme on Urbanization Data and Statistics will report on its strategic direction and implementation of activities to the Statistical Commission for Africa.

## **V. Points for discussion**

13. The need for urban development statistics in Africa is informed by national development plans, strategies and visions, including Agenda 2063, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat–III). Given the key opportunities and challenges based on the country experiences shared, ECA proposes further establishing coordination mechanisms at the national level on the role of the national statistics offices in production and analysis of urban development data.