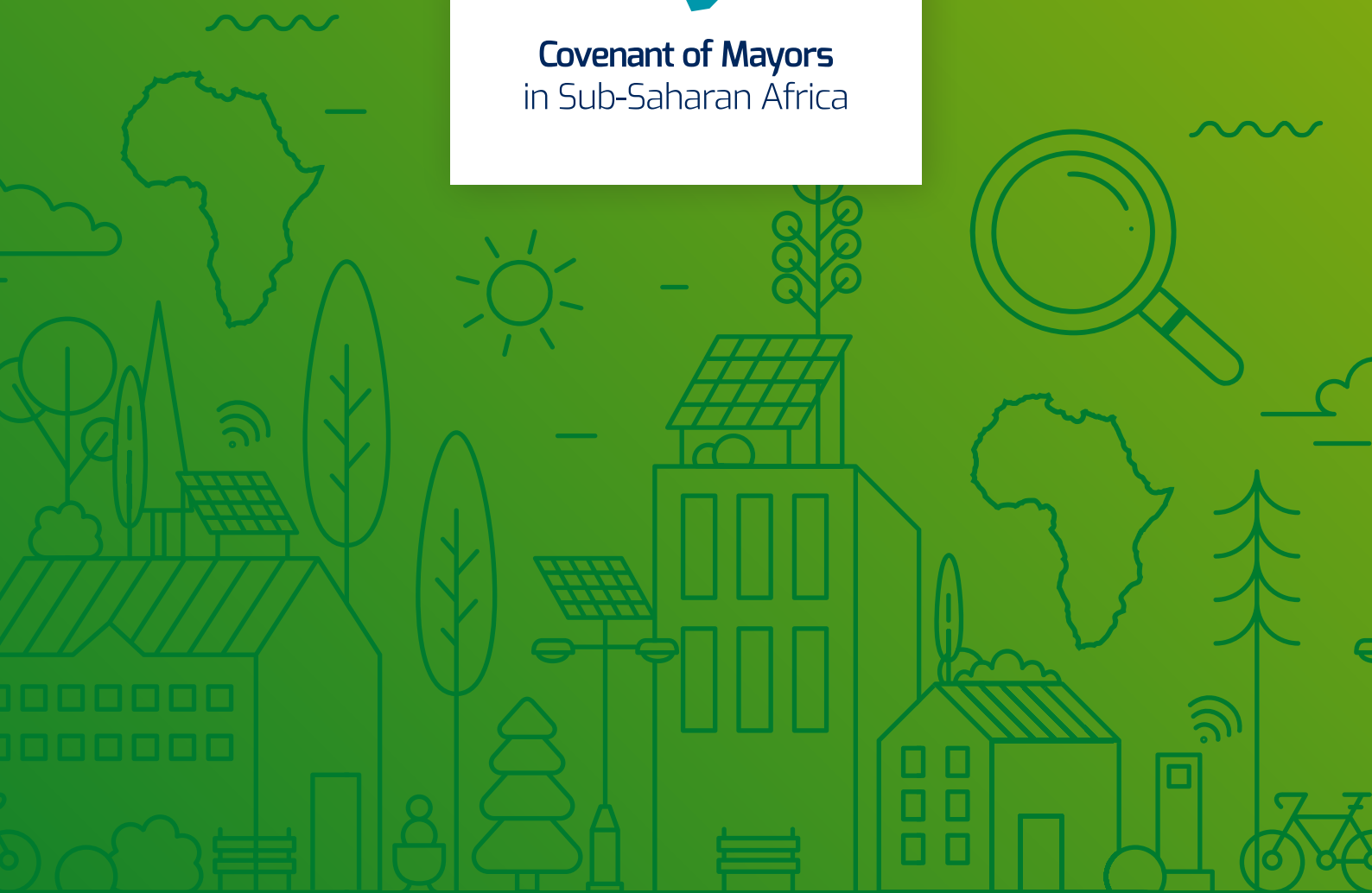




Covenant of Mayors
in Sub-Saharan Africa



Evidence-Based Report 2

Accelerating climate change action planning for smart implementation: Examples from African municipalities

Produced by the CoM SSA Secretariat and Technical Helpdesk

September 2021



European Union



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Key messages



There is an urgent need for local governments across Africa to develop climate action plans and associated implementation plans to strengthen the resilience and sustainability of rapidly growing urban populations.



Although many African municipalities do not have the available financial resources to immediately implement their climate action plans, developing the action plans now provides many opportunities and benefits, including innovative ways to start implementing some actions.



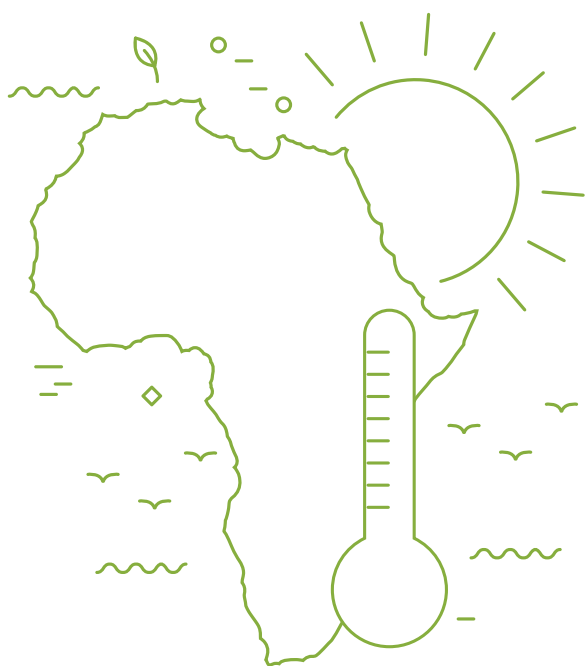
Local governments do still face numerous barriers and challenges to accelerating climate change action planning that results in impactful implementation, including: invisible benefits of climate action, limited financial and technical capacity, institutional silos and insufficient political will and mandates.



There are various drivers of climate action, as well as enabling factors that facilitate accelerated action planning by local governments, that lead to increased smart implementation, including: strong leadership and climate champions, mainstreaming of climate change into development planning, collaboration and resource-sharing, promotion of the co-benefits of climate action, and good multilevel governance.



Although planning and implementation of climate actions is often constrained by various factors, multiple local governments across Africa have, through various methods, managed to accelerate their climate change action planning processes, leading to increased smart implementation where local governments are able to quickly begin working with other organisations, businesses and communities to start implementing their action plans.





Introduction

Urban areas throughout the world have begun to experience the impacts of climate change. In Africa specifically, the impacts of floods, droughts and extreme high temperatures have already been recorded across the continent (Hannaford and Nash, 2016) and these impacts are projected to increase with future climate change. Urban areas experience climate change impacts more acutely than rural areas, with urban areas experiencing hotter temperatures and more severe flooding on average than surrounding regions (Lombraña and Dodge, 2021). Increases in the volume of rainfall, intensity of storms, mean and maximum annual temperatures, incidence of natural disasters, and the unpredictability of these will have costly effects on infrastructure, buildings, service delivery, livelihoods and human health. In addition, in 2000, an estimated 54 million Africans lived in low-elevation coastal zones, which are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts such as inundation or salination of the water table due to sea level rise, or coastal erosion due to increased intensity and frequency of coastal storms. This figure is projected to increase to ~110 million by 2030 and ~210 million in 2060 (Neumann et al., 2015).

Urbanisation rates in Africa are particularly high when compared with the rest of the world. The urban population in Africa is projected to increase from 43% to 59% by 2050 (UNDESA, 2018), while the number of Africans living in coastal cities is projected to double by 2050 (Becker et al., 2019). While greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across Africa represent a relatively small share of the global total (CDP, 2020), the rapid urbanisation on the continent presents an opportunity for African municipalities to invest in low-carbon sustainable development. Simultaneously, the increases in vulnerability to climate change that accompany urbanisation mean there is an urgent need for local governments to develop climate action plans and associated implementation plans to strengthen the resilience and sustainability of urban populations. Implementation plans are especially important because, through their development, actions can be prioritised and local government can identify who would be responsible for implementing the action, the costs involved and the steps that would need to be taken. Thus, implementation plans can accelerate climate action as actions are delegated and the required steps are known by all.

Despite the fact that many African municipalities do not necessarily have the available financial resources to immediately implement their climate action plans, developing the action plans now still provides many opportunities and benefits. For example, if local governments develop climate action plans, they can begin looking for alignment with other new and ongoing projects and initiatives, they can identify opportunities for implementation through external institutions and other groups such as the private sector, and they can ensure that different departments do not implement activities that are misaligned with the overarching climate change goals for the municipality, as there is one central plan to guide all activities. Thus, local governments do not necessarily need an already identified budget to begin implementing climate actions, as they can identify other avenues for implementation – this is, in essence, smart implementation underpinned by robust climate action planning.

While local governments in Africa are ramping up their climate ambitions and action plans to put in place climate mitigation and adaptation measures in response to the increasing impacts of climate change, they still face a number of barriers and challenges to accelerating climate change action planning that results in impactful and efficient implementation. **Some of these barriers and challenges include the following:**



Invisible benefits: Planning and development priorities in municipalities are often driven by the urgent need for basic service delivery provision. Planning for climate change can therefore seem like an overwhelming additional task that burdens municipalities with more work than they have budget or time for, without understanding the true value of climate change mitigation and adaptation actions, as well as their associated co-benefits. (ICLEI Africa, 2019; Pasquini and Enqvist, 2019)



Limited financial capacity: Undertaking the required technical analyses for climate change action planning such as risk and vulnerability assessments or emissions inventories are often resource-intensive processes that municipalities cannot afford on their own. In addition, municipalities are usually constrained to rely on the revenue they obtain from rates and taxes which is generally insufficient to cover the costs of climate mitigation and adaptation measures. Looking for external funds to implement climate action plans is also challenging, as most actions will be too small (both in ticket size and in impact) for financiers or donors to fund (ICLEI Africa, 2020; Pasquini et al., 2013).



Limited technical capacity: Many municipalities do not have the technical capacity to measure or predict the impacts of climate change locally, and do not know how to design appropriate responses to the climate challenge at the local level (Pasquini et al., 2013).



Institutional silos: Planning, investing in and maintaining environmental and climate change related interventions is often impeded by limited cross-departmental collaboration and viewed as the responsibility of environmental or climate change departments as opposed to other municipal departments. In reality, climate change is cross-cutting and should be seen as an important issue for many municipal departments, including planning, engineering and community services (Pasquini and Enqvist, 2019).



Insufficient political will or mandate: In more centralised countries, formal institutional structures can constrain the agency of municipal actors to proactively plan for climate change. Local governments are increasingly initiating action on climate change, but these initiatives are often largely decoupled from national policy frameworks which limits the resources available to local governments to plan and implement adaptation and mitigation actions to address climate change (Corfee-Morlot et al., 2009).

Despite the above barriers and challenges, many African municipalities are successfully planning for climate change and implementing actions to reduce emissions and build resilience. These examples are the focus of this report.



Aim

The aim of this report is to showcase enabling factors, examples and best practices from municipalities in Africa which have succeeded in overcoming some of the above barriers and, as a result, accelerated climate change action planning for smart implementation.



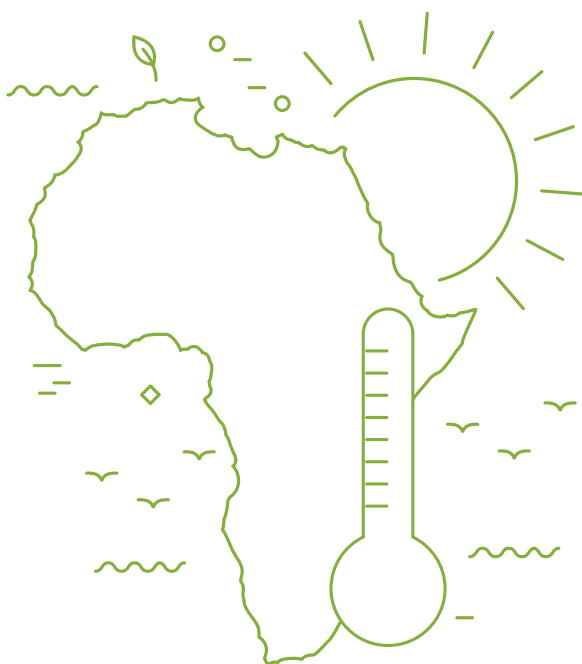
Methodology

This evidence-based report draws on a number of sources to achieve the aim as stated above. These include peer-reviewed journal articles, case studies, work undertaken by multiple organisations across the climate change space (including ICLEI Africa and its partners), and especially the best practices and lessons learned from municipalities themselves as they plan for and implement climate action.



Findings

There are various drivers of climate action, as well as enabling factors that facilitate accelerated action planning by local governments that leads to increased smart implementation. This means that local governments are able to quickly start working with other organisations, businesses and communities to start implementing their action plans by looking for new opportunities arising from stakeholder engagement, innovation, advances in technology and changing market demands. A discussion of some enabling factors and opportunities, as well as examples of how they have played out in municipalities to overcome the above barriers is presented below.





Leadership and climate champions

One of the central factors that seems to drive climate change action forward in municipalities is the presence of strong leadership and climate champions who are able to create an organisational mindset change in the municipality. Political leadership is essential for driving rapid change, while administrative leadership can also be essential for proactive change, as environmentally qualified individuals will have greater knowledge of complex climate change issues.

In Hessequa, a small rural municipality in the Western Cape of South Africa that has initiated climate adaptation mainstreaming activities, political champions have driven the municipality's climate change action planning processes. Specifically, in less than a five-year term, two senior councillors were able to implement a mind-set change in the municipality that led directly to initiatives geared towards sustainable development (Pasquini et al., 2015). In this case, senior political leadership brought about rapid change in a municipality in terms of climate mainstreaming, and importantly, brought municipal officials together across internal divisions, facilitating a coordinated approach.

Similarly, in Durban, South Africa, much of the earliest climate work is attributed to the efforts of Debra Roberts, Head of the Environmental Management Department (EMD), who was committed to the climate change cause. Roberts was willing to explore unfamiliar terrain and initiated the development of the Municipality's Climate Protection Programme (MCP), as well as an initial climate change impact assessment (Carmin et al., 2009). These pieces of work generated sufficient interest so that Roberts, working through the EMD, was able to initiate the development of an adaptation strategy for the city in 2006.

One of the benefits of having climate champions, is that they can raise awareness of climate change across different departments, sectors and organisations operating in the municipality. This can encourage individuals in other institutions to begin reviewing their own plans, policies and activities with a climate change lens, identifying how they could potentially address climate change within their own mandate, ultimately increasing implementation across the municipality. In addition, if other organisations and departments are aware of an existing climate change action plan, they are more likely to ensure that all their plans are aligned with it, also facilitating faster implementation.

Thus, changes in mindsets and the introduction of new initiatives can sometimes be attributed to the efforts of a local champion, whether this is an elected official, government employee, or local resident. Since political champions seem to be fundamental for rapid change, municipalities could consider providing specific training to their senior councillors – as occurred in Hessequa – while organisations and stakeholders working closely with municipalities (such as ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability) could focus more explicitly on interacting with senior politicians (Pasquini et al., 2015). These steps can work to address insufficient political will in municipalities and create an enabling environment for climate change action.



One of the benefits of having climate champions, is that they can raise awareness of climate change across different departments.





Mainstreaming climate change into development planning

Impacts of climate change manifest differently depending on where municipalities are located, meaning that each municipality must understand the potential impacts of climate change in their specific region and respond accordingly. One way to streamline this process is to include targeted climate change responses within municipal mandates to ensure that service delivery is uninterrupted as far as possible and local development needs are addressed, while localised climate change impacts are accounted for and appropriate responses are implemented (ICLEI Africa, 2019). For example, one of the mandates of local municipalities is to provide safe and accessible water. As climate change negatively impacts water supply, a municipality could introduce a water treatment and reuse facility that supplies water for irrigation, instead of individuals using potable water for this purpose.

Mainstreaming climate change into development plans is likely to be more successful than addressing it in isolation through departmental or sectoral climate change policies or plans, as this approach ensures that the challenge of institutional silos is addressed. It also ensures that development gains will not be undermined by climate risk (Vincent and Colenbrander, 2018).

An example of how this process works can be found in the Barotse sub-basin of the Zambezi River in Zambia. Here, the **Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR)** is being implemented, working to build awareness and understanding of climate change and its threats in 14 districts. To ensure the sustainability of these interventions, the PPCR requires that districts mainstream climate change into their development plans at district and ward level. To this end, a five-step process underpinned by theory on climate risk assessment and robust decision-making was applied to District and/or Integrated Development Plans in six districts. These plans were retrofitted in a participatory manner to address climate change considerations, considering gendered impacts of climate change where necessary. Undertaking such a process to mainstream climate change provided a framework to enable the achievement of adaptation and mitigation commitments enshrined in Zambia's national and local climate change commitments and policies. The knowledge and skills gained through this process not only improved the likelihood of climate-resilient development in these districts, but also contributed to strengthening district-level capacity (Vincent and Colenbrander, 2018).

Undertaking the mainstreaming of climate change into development planning has the potential to address multiple barriers to climate action. This approach treats climate change as the cross-cutting issue it is, thereby reducing the silo effect often observed in municipalities' responses to climate change. It also ensures that climate change actions are included in municipalities' existing budgets, eliminating the need to source additional funding and addressing the challenge of limited financial capacity. Finally, this approach allows municipalities to maintain their development and service delivery priorities, while simultaneously addressing climate change concerns.



Mainstreaming climate change into development plans is likely to be more successful than addressing it in isolation through departmental or sectoral climate change policies or plans. ”



Collaboration and resource sharing

A common requirement for municipalities when undertaking the development of climate change action plans is the completion of technical assessments such as baseline GHG emissions inventories, risk and vulnerability assessments, and energy access assessments. Development of these technical reports is often constrained by limited technical capacity in municipalities which do not have the training or knowledge to complete the assessments themselves, and limited financial capacity, preventing municipalities from outsourcing this process. To overcome these barriers, some municipalities have looked to collaboration and resource sharing.

For example, the Communauté des Communes de Zo is a group of nine municipalities in the south of Benin who collaborated with each other to develop a joint Sustainable Energy Access and Climate Action Plan (SEACAP) under the **Covenant of Mayors in Sub-Saharan Africa (CoM SSA)** initiative. By choosing this model, the nine municipalities have committed to shared emissions reductions. In addition, through joining together and collaborating to develop one overarching SEACAP, these municipalities have been able to pool human and financial resources and expertise, strengthen institutional cooperation between their local governments, and create the potential for access to finance for implementing climate projects through drafting joint proposals or implementing projects at scale (ICLEI Africa, 2020).

Similarly, in the municipality of Tsévié in Togo, strong collaboration with local research institutions and civil society organisations has facilitated the accelerated development of Tsévié's SEACAP. A strong technical team including professors from the University of Lomé, members of local NGOs and officials from the municipality oversaw the development of the SEACAP, with roles, responsibilities and ownership clearly allocated. Taking this approach can significantly reduce costs as local governments do not need to hire external consultants to collect and analyse data and do not need to appoint additional technical staff as researchers can build the capacity of municipal staff. In addition, researchers can facilitate cross learnings and climate change mainstreaming by working with multiple departments within the municipality (ICLEI Africa 2020). This also provides an opportunity to capitalise on collaboration with existing initiatives, both global or local, as proposed climate change actions and implementation measures can be shared in public meetings and workshops within existing initiatives. Sharing these implementation measures can inspire the public to adopt a similar approach in combatting a climate impact they are experiencing, or could result in an initiative adjusting their plans to contribute to implementation.

An additional benefit of collaboration relates to the funding of climate actions. When looking to implement local climate action plans, the comparatively smaller size of the actions or projects within these plans makes them more difficult to fund. One potential solution for this is to pool similar actions or projects, resulting in a programme with a larger ticket size, more likely to attract funding. Doing this requires collaboration and excellent lines of communication between different local governments. Linked to this, opportunities should also be explored related to scaling successful projects within country/regional contexts.

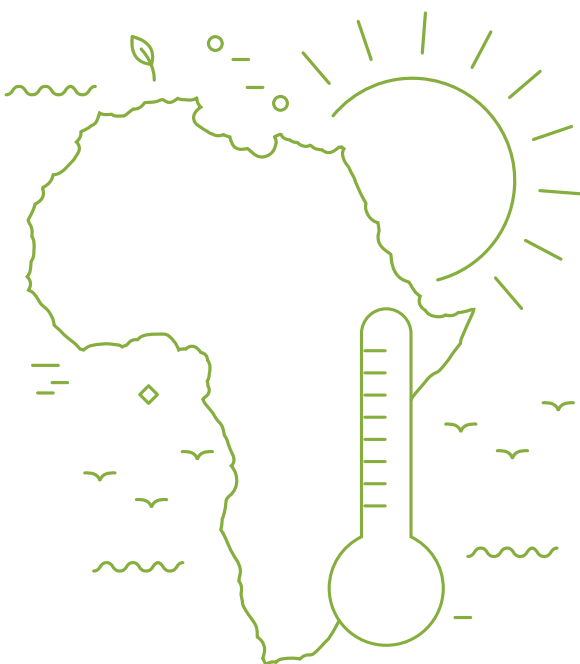
As evidenced above, collaboration and resource sharing can help to address the challenges of limited technical and financial capacities within municipalities and can accelerate the process of climate change action planning and implementation.

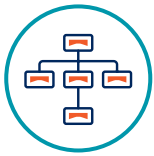


Promotion of co-benefits

In African municipalities, it can be challenging to garner support at the local level for climate change action, especially climate change mitigation initiatives, when African municipalities' relative contributions to the long-term consequences of global warming are still negligible. One way of overcoming this challenge is to promote the co-benefits of climate actions which are other societal, economic and environmental benefits that are derived alongside the adaptation or mitigation benefits (Agyemang-Bonsu et al., 2019). For example, there are a number of co-benefits associated with installing solar street lighting, the primary goal of which is to reduce GHG emissions from non-renewable energy sources. These co-benefits would appeal to local communities and include: 1) an improved sense of safety, particularly for women and children who may feel more vulnerable at night; 2) decreased opportunities for crime which typically occurs in areas where lighting is low; and 3) the creation of local jobs for installation as well as maintenance (ICLEI Africa, 2019). Another example is urban greening which can translate into energy savings and reduced GHG emissions, but also provide the co-benefits of restoring local water balances, improving mental well-being, and increasing socio-economic opportunities within municipalities by supporting tourism and boosting property values (Pasquini and Enqvist, 2019).

The benefit of using the above approach is that co-benefits can appeal to all citizens who will experience the enhancements brought by climate change co-benefits in their daily life and work, regardless of whether they believe climate change is real or important (Bain et al., 2016). It can therefore indirectly ensure support for climate initiatives at the local level. In a study conducted by Bain et al. (2016), data were gathered from 24 countries spanning all inhabited continents and with diverse carbon emission levels, including Ghana and South Africa. In this study, authors investigated how perceptions of co-benefits are related to people's motivations to act on climate change around the world. They found that motivations to act on climate change were consistently and positively related to beliefs about co-benefits, regardless of whether individuals were convinced or unconvinced that climate change is real or important. Promoting co-benefits of climate actions can therefore be an important tool for local governments seeking buy-in and support from the communities they service. To achieve this, an important step is making local climate action and implementation plans publicly available, mentioning them regularly at meetings and workshops and promoting the opportunities and co-benefits associated with these plans.





Multilevel governance

Although local governments are well placed to develop policy and programmatic solutions that best meet their specific geographic, climatic, economic, and cultural conditions, their ability to mainstream climate change actions into their activities can be constrained by the vertical and horizontal divisions of responsibilities across different levels of government. It is therefore critical to understand local governments' mandates and whether they can set their own planning visions and objectives, whether they have regulatory and decision-making powers, and what financial resources and autonomy over their budgets they have (Tait and Euston-Brown 2017). Multilevel governance can ensure that municipalities overcome the above constraints.

Multilevel governance, simply put, means working together across different levels of government – vertical and horizontal cooperation – to plan and implement climate change action more effectively. Decentralisation is one method of improving multilevel governance, where political powers, administrative functions or fiscal resources are transferred from national to local governments (Paulais 2012). Evidence of this was found in a study conducted by Tait and Euston-Brown (2017) where they examined how local governments' agency to steer low-carbon urban development can be enabled or constrained by multi-level governance arrangements. They focused on the municipalities of Jinja in Uganda, Ga East in Ghana, and Polokwane in South Africa and found that, in Jinja and Ga East, there has been limited progress with implementing decentralisation reforms which has greatly limited the types of climate change interventions these municipalities can implement. In contrast, in South Africa, there is a multi-level governance structure that is highly decentralised, giving municipalities a great degree of autonomy when undertaking their administrative functions. As a result, the municipality of Polokwane has far-reaching responsibilities, including waste, sanitation, electricity, air quality management, public transport and economic development. It has already undertaken some climate action initiatives, for example energy-efficient retrofitting of traffic and street lighting, as well as water pumping and sanitation systems. In addition to devolved responsibility, the municipality's activities are also situated within South Africa's enabling national climate policy environment. Indeed, aligning local level plans with national plans can help to ensure that finance flows to the local level, facilitating implementation of climate actions. This study indicates that good multilevel governance practices that empower local governments, and provide them with the competencies, financial resources and political will to drive local action, can accelerate climate action planning and implementation. For further information on multilevel engagements, see the [Urban Natural Assets for Africa's Handbook 11: Multi-level engagements: improving national and local working relationships through dialogue](#).

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Conclusions

Municipalities in Africa experience an array of severe climate change impacts requiring the implementation of adaptation initiatives to build resilience, while also ensuring that projected urbanisation is done in a low-carbon and sustainable manner. The planning and implementation of these climate actions is often constrained by a number of factors including limited financial and technical capacity of local governments, insufficient political will or mandate, limited cross-departmental collaboration and limited understanding of the full range of benefits of climate actions. Despite these challenges, multiple local governments across Africa have, through various methods, managed to accelerate their climate change action planning processes, leading to increased smart implementation where local governments are able to quickly begin working with other organisations, businesses and communities to start implementing their action plans. Some of the ways this can be achieved include the presence of strong leadership and climate champions, mainstreaming climate change into development planning, collaboration and resource sharing between municipalities, promoting the co-benefits of climate action to facilitate buy-in and support, and promoting good multilevel governance approaches. Through the above, local governments may be able to catalyse climate action in their municipalities. They can then accelerate its implementation using smart approaches, for example, through looking for alignment with other new and ongoing projects and initiatives, identifying opportunities for implementation through external institutions and initiatives, or pooling resources and projects to catalyse greater investment. Thus, local governments can identify innovative avenues for implementation, and accelerate climate action in their municipalities.

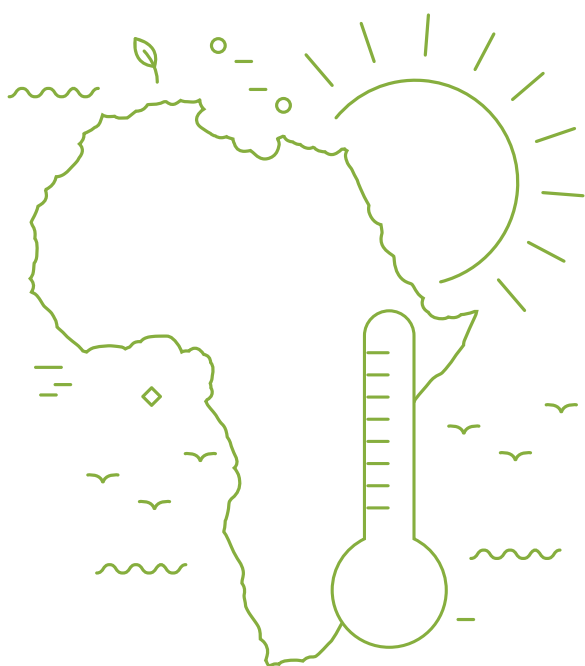


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Covenant of Mayors
in Sub-Saharan Africa

About the Covenant of Mayors in Sub-Saharan Africa

Started in 2015, the Covenant of Mayors in Sub-Saharan Africa (CoM SSA) is a major catalyst for local climate action in the region, with political commitment from over 250 local governments. The purpose of CoM SSA is to support local governments in moving from planning to implementation, with a focus on unlocking climate finance at the local level.

The CoM SSA initiative is a European Union (EU) action that supports the external dimension of the European Green Deal, as the global challenges of climate change and environmental degradation require a global response. At the same time CoM SSA moves to strengthen the Africa-EU partnership and supports Agenda 2063 of the African Union Commission.

CoM SSA is the regional chapter of an international alliance of cities, the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy. It is a partnership between city networks, development agencies and funding institutions, supporting cities in meeting the dual challenge of climate change and access to sustainable energy to achieve a low-emission, climate resilient and sustainable energy future.

Why work on energy and climate change with cities on the African continent?

- By 2050 Africa's urban population will triple, and will be the second largest urban population in the world.
- Despite being the continent most affected by the impacts of climate change and contributing 4% to global greenhouse gas emissions, only 3% of total climate finance flows to Africa.
- Currently 548 million people lack access to electricity in Africa.

The CoM SSA initiative works through three pillars of action:

- 1. Planning support:** development of Sustainable Energy Access and Climate Action Plans (SEACAPs),
- 2. Project development:** urban infrastructure project support, and
- 3. Knowledge exchange and partnerships:** city-to-city/regional partnerships and exchanges

The integrated CoM SSA Secretariat and technical helpdesk are the first contact points for CoM SSA cities and serve all CoM SSA signatories with light touch technical support and deep-dive support to a limited number of signatories. The CoM SSA Secretariat and technical helpdesk are the key coordination structures for the initiative, providing advocacy support, and ensuring effective communication and visibility for the initiative.

Contact: helpdesk@comssa.org | <https://comssa.org/en>