



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

**Expert Group Meeting on the Validation of the 2024 State
of Urbanization in Africa Report**

Digital transformation in light of rapid urbanization

Aide-memoire

**22-23 October 2024
Addis Ababa**

**Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division
(ECA)**

Introduction

Urbanization in Africa is one of the most significant demographic trends of the 21st century. As rural populations increasingly migrate to urban areas, African cities are experiencing rapid expansion and transformation. By 2050, it's projected that over 60% of Africa's population will reside in urban areas, up from approximately 40% today. This shift brings both opportunities and challenges: it drives economic growth and innovation but also strains infrastructure, social services, and environmental resources.

Understanding and managing this rapid urbanization is crucial for sustainable development. It requires innovative solutions to address the growing needs for housing, transportation, healthcare, and education, while also mitigating the negative impacts on the environment and quality of life.

Background

Digitalization offers transformative potential for addressing the challenges posed by rapid urbanization. By leveraging digital technologies, cities can enhance service delivery, improve governance, and foster economic development. Technologies such as smart grids, digital public services, and data analytics can help optimize resource management, enhance public safety, and increase citizen engagement. As urban areas in Africa continue to grow, integrating digital solutions becomes essential for building resilient, efficient, and inclusive urban environments.

The study under review explores the role of digital transformation in managing the complexities of rapid urbanization in Africa. It examines how digital technologies are being applied to urban management, including planning, infrastructure development, and service delivery in various African cities. The study highlights successful case studies, identifies key challenges and opportunities, and provides policy recommendations for leveraging digital tools to support sustainable urban development.

The focus is on: digital infrastructure; accessibility and affordability of digital services; digital skills; and e-Government. The report includes case studies from selected African cities demonstrating innovative uses of digital tools.

Objective of the Expert Group Meeting (EGM)

The meeting will focus on the overall theme digital transformation in the context of rapid urbanization. The main sub-themes that inform the expert group deliberations include:

- The nexus between urbanisation and digital transformation
- *Transformative policies for inclusive and sustainable cities in digital age and conclusions*
- *The status of digital transformation in the context of rapid urbanisation in Africa: progress, gap, and priorities*
- Digital Infrastructure for inclusive and Sustainable Urbanization in Africa (Including governance and digital skills)

The expert group meeting provides a useful platform for receiving feedback from experts and delegates from focus countries on the report to enrich the content and key messages.

Key Outputs

- A report on the workshop deliberations and a workplan for finalizing the Report.
- A framework and the preferred approaches to produce the Report

Expected outcomes

- Critically reviewed and validated findings, methodologies, and recommendations of the study.
- Gathered insights and feedback from experts in urban development, digital technology, and policy to enhance the study's quality and relevance.
- Clear strategic recommendations on how to guide the principal authors in finalizing the report.

Participation and format of the EGM

The workshop will bring together approximately 20-25 participants with expertise in different areas of urban development. The discussions during the workshop will be structured around issues of digital transformation in the context of rapid urbanization. Past editions of UDS/GPSPD will anchor the discussions of the workshop. It will also spearhead the next editions of the report.

7. Venue and dates

The workshop will be held at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 22-23 October 2024.

8. Contacts

For further details on the workshop, kindly contact the following:

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