



Seventh Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7)
8 - 12 December 2025 | Nairobi, Kenya

Cities and Regions Summit

5 December | 09:30 - 18:00 EAT | Hybrid Event

Thematic Session 1 | Environmental Governance

Thematic Session 2 | Overcoming the Finance Barriers



Thematic Session 1. Environmental Governance:

Empowering Local and Regional Governments to Achieve the Goals of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements

Examples

Share examples of how your local and regional government engages with national or international environmental frameworks.

In Nairobi county, the county government in collaboration with environmental and sustainability experts such as WRI and local community groups such as Slum Dwellers International, they conducted a Nairobi River rehabilitation program to try and find solutions to the pollution of the Nairobi River. This program allowed for the interpretation of the SDG 11 to a workable solution that is community led and contextually appropriate. Focus studies and transect walks were conducted with the help of the local community and at the end of it, they were able to capture the community's vision for the river they live alongside. Actionable steps were brainstormed on how Nature Based Solutions would be implemented to achieve this, which is a big win in my opinion. :)

Share examples of how national governments are strengthening multi-level governance to empower subnational actors to contribute to national/international environmental goals

To further elaborate on the previous example on the Nairobi County government and their collaboration with international and local groups: The efforts by the county government to interpret the SDG goals to the local community through their community based organizations and academic institutions has helped a lot. The community is able to put forward solutions that are locally led and defend them on the county and national scale. This was seen through a workshop organized by the WRI last year in collaboration with the county government where local stakeholders were able to discuss and explain their vision of the Nairobi River.

Recommendations

What are your top suggestions to strengthen the engagement of local and regional governments in the implementation of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements ?

There is much needed importance of incorporating education on Climate change, Biodiversity and pollution in the school curriculum and local communities. Most initiatives by local groups are also not recognized, hence a need of incentivized action as well highlighting those at the forefront of climate resilience. Create a common focal point where both local and regional government receive and have a reference on what happens at the policy level and implementation level.

Political will of the city mayors in African countries is affected by the lack of independence of the local government. Alignment with their local NGOs can help strengthen cooperation and accountability and action.

Civic education and community engagement will be the strongest way of uniting all levels of governance towards a common goal. All stakeholders being aware of what is needed to be achieved and how they can be implemented will give a sense of ownership for all parties involved

Africa impediments is primarily energy , water and accountability in general, which affects budgets implementation and physical development. UNEA-7 guidelines will be achieved if accountability becomes the priority or norm in all aspects of the project and the principles of leaving no one behind. I recommend supervision and accountability coordination by the board and management. Involving CSOs and community compliance is key for achieving the goals and objectives of UNEA-7

City finance systems do not always align with municipal climate objectives. Subnational governance resources are dedicated to specific urban planning objectives. While these may intersect with climate actions, there are several other climate actions which require special funding vehicles. Regional and global climate finance mechanisms need more devolution to ensure that these climate financing sources are also available and accessible for city-level climate work.

Challenges

What do you think are the key barriers to local implementation ?

Lack of civic education. If the local community is engaged in these programs and not just subjected to them, then they will be more likely to be involved and have a sense of ownership to whatever programs are developed.

Poverty as well. The local population is mainly concerned on how they can get immediate gain from whatever programs are implemented in their communities. This may make them prioritize short term gain over long-term gains.

Fragmentation of implementation plans is causing a lack of consensus on the action of common goals. Lack of a deep dive into the sensitization of the urgency of why we need sustainable cities and regions.

Determining the capacity of cities and towns before urbanization is critical for sustainable development. However it is hard because census projections are not used for this process, and would be questionable if so, but long-term land use planning should integrate this perspective. Likewise, implementation policies and plans remain a major challenge despite available frameworks.

How can planners and policy makers ensure these capacities inform decisions to avoid urban chaos?

Thematic Session 2: Overcoming the Financial Barriers

Unlocking Finance for Synergistic Local Action

Examples

Share examples of successful finance mechanisms you have tested to overcome the financial barriers cities and regions face to tackle climate change.

Implemented a blended finance approach combining public grants with private sector investment for renewable energy projects. This reduced upfront costs and attracted long-term investors.

Challenges

What are the key barriers your government/organisation face when financing local climate action?

Based on my experience in housing retrofit projects in the UK and observing initiatives in Kenya and Nigeria, key barriers governments face in financing local climate action include limited funding, high perceived investment risk, and fragmented governance. Multi-stakeholder collaboration, pooled or blended finance, and transparent governance structures are critical to overcoming these challenges.

Limited access to affordable credit and lack of risk-sharing mechanisms make it difficult for local governments to secure financing for climate projects.

Recommendations

Which mechanism or instrument would you recommend to overcome the financial barriers preventing local climate action?

In my experience coordinating donor-funded housing retrofit projects, we successfully leveraged pool financing, combining multiple government and donor funding streams, to overcome financial barriers and deliver measurable climate and social impact.

For local climate action more broadly, I would recommend pool financing and, where possible, blended finance to attract private investment, combined with FX hedging or guarantees to mitigate financial risk, particularly in LMICs.



Local communities, youth and indigenous communities have enormous ideas. I recommend seed funding in already working initiatives. Continuous upskilling and training in the thematic areas of pollution, biodiversity and climate change to drive investment in scalable innovation.

Other comments/ideas/questions

Anything else?

Really grateful for the Youth Environment Assembly that allowed dissemination of educative information on the state of environmental strategies and impact.

Green Blue knowledge economy in Cities and Regions

Cities and Regions Summit Wrap-up

Linking Summit Outcomes to UNEA-7 and the Global Sustainability Agenda

Examples

Share recent achievements on the global environmental achievements for local and regional governments.

Honestly, it's been a situation of one step forward and two steps back but i'll list the positives i can:

Firstly, it's the social entrepreneurship that is valued in our local community. There has been an active boost by the local, regional and international stakeholders to support locally-led solutions to the SDGs. Example: recognition and amplification of the efforts of the recent UNEP young champion of the earth.

Second, the CSR initiatives by both the public and private sector have improved the environmental situation in a lot of communities. Example: Safaricom Foundation working to make an impact in the local community through civic education and reforestation efforts

Recommendations

Share opportunities in the upcoming global processes for cities and regions

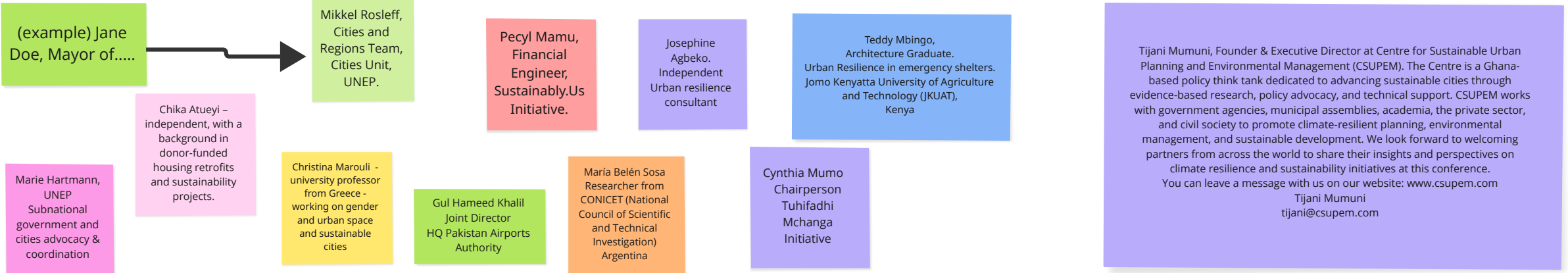
Given the world is currently in the midst of development of Artificial Intelligence, it is really important that this be achieved as sustainably as possible.

Given the presence of these big tech firms in Kenya, cities have a chance to promote this sustainable development by implementing policies aligned with the SDGs as early as possible to prevent irreparable damage. Thanks :)

Implementing a blended finance approach combining public grants with private sector investment for renewable energy projects. This reduces upfront costs and attracted long-term investors. This must flow to utilities such as water and "commons" which can be scaled up for use for all and have multiple co-benefits.

Cities and Regions Summit Opening: Advancing Sustainable solutions through local action

Please introduce yourself: Name, Position, government/organization



Share your perspective on the role of cities and regions in "Advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet" (the UNEA-7 theme)

The transition to a sustainable planet depends on cities and regions. They are the level of government that directly represents those most affected by pollution, climate risk, and environmental neglect. By giving voice to communities that often feel unheard, they can drive inclusive, ground-level solutions that national targets alone cannot deliver.

The urban dimension isn't just a side issue — it is *central* to any credible response to climate change, environmental degradation, and the drive toward sustainable development. Cities and regions are at once among the greatest sources of risk (pollution, flooding, heat stress, social inequity) and among the greatest levers for transformation (infrastructure, governance, innovation, scale). Pakistani cities can lead UNEA-7 ambitions by adopting climate-smart planning, nature-based solutions, green buildings, clean transport, circular waste systems, empowered governance, and inclusive development.

Well, policy is the handbook that guides the development of villages, municipalities, towns and cities as a whole. In Kenya for example, we are guided by Kenya's Vision 2030, which is in turn guided by Africa's Agenda 2063, which is in turn guided by the 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals. So on and so forth.

Cities and regions have the obligation to interpret these policies to their varying local contexts and ensure that they are adhered to. A good example would be Nairobi city's use of local and community-led Nature Based Solutions to help rejuvenate the polluted Nairobi River :)

We need local action and we need participatory urban governance and design. We need constant – consistent participatory and inclusive platforms where **everyday knowledge (esp. of now marginalized groups)** is equally valued to expert knowledge. Local action makes any action relevant to people and everyday life.

Cities are the center, as well as their climates, we have to improve our climate sensitive-planning perspective specially for the low income per capita countries like Argentina

Working in Nairobi's CBD really highlights the magnitude to which policies play a role in implementing sustainable practices. With proper guidelines problems such as; water drainages working without flooding during the rainy seasons, road worthy vehicles being allowed on the roads to avoid pollution because I frankly feel the difference in air quality when I leave the CBD. Provide high quality education and sensitization programs for locals to really understand the "Why" of policies instead of just rolling them out in different thematic regions.

Tijani Mumuni. As Executive Director of the Centre for Sustainable Urban Planning and Environmental Management (CSUPEM) in Ghana, I wish to emphasize the urgent need to integrate climate risk into all local planning systems, empower municipalities with stronger data and financing, and scale nature-based solutions as core urban infrastructure. African cities face growing climate pressures, but with climate-informed planning, transparent governance, and strategic partnerships, urban growth can drive resilience rather than risk. CSUPEM stands ready to collaborate with global and regional partners to advance practical, climate-smart urban development across Africa.