

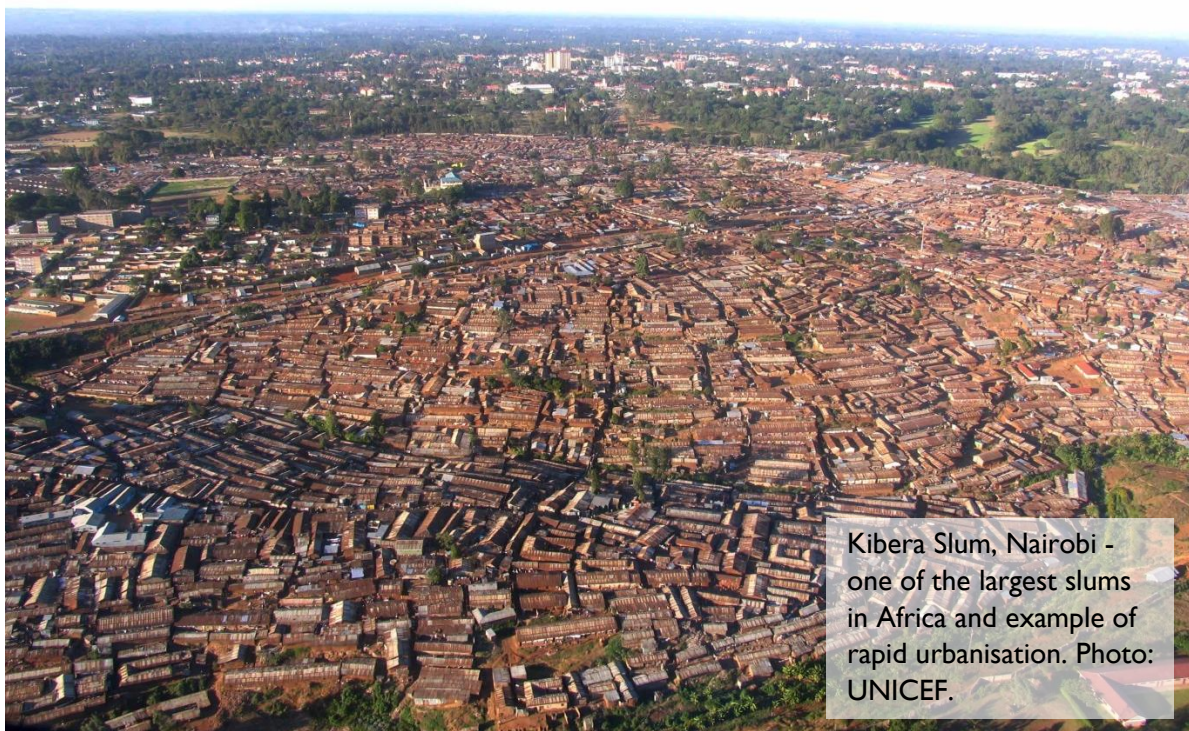
Application for grant to attend the Commonwealth Association of Planners South Africa Business Meeting and Planning Africa Conference 2018

Planning impacts the lives of everyone in the world and the decisions that we as planners make about how our cities and communities evolve fundamentally influences how successful, inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable they will become.

Half of the World's population - 3.5 billion people¹ - now live in cities and according to the World Bank, 5 million people are moving to cities every month². It is anticipated that two thirds of the world's population will be living in cities by 2050³.

According to the Prince's Foundation *'The speed and scale of growth means that managing urban areas, and planning for new sustainable urban extensions, will be one of the most important challenges facing cities and societies in the 21st century'* (2018). Young planners in the Commonwealth will be at the forefront of tackling these challenges through their careers.

With more people than ever, cities are not only rapidly expanding, they are experiencing unprecedented pressure on their infrastructure, resources and housing. Those migrating to cities come in search of better prospects and living standards, however often end up living in poverty and becoming marginalised. Therefore there is a vital need to ensure that urban planning and planners play a central role in improving living conditions for city dwellers and delivering the homes, infrastructure and mechanisms to manage increasing urbanisation and make sure cities are designed to encourage inclusiveness, promote safety and make efficient use of resources.



Kibera Slum, Nairobi - one of the largest slums in Africa and example of rapid urbanisation. Photo: UNICEF.

¹ UN (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>)

² World Bank (2015) *A New Approach to Cities: Everyone Counts* (<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2015/10/29/a-new-approach-to-cities-including-inclusion>)

³ Planning for Rapid Urbanisation through urban extensions to secondary cities in the Commonwealth. A toolkit for Mayors and Urban Practitioners (2018).

The *2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development* includes *Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities* to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable⁴.

These goals are particularly relevant for the Commonwealth which has a population of 2.4 Billion people, and a staggering 60% of these are under 30⁵. As young planners, it is vital that we focus on improving the urban environment for our generation and those to come. To do this, we need to learn from each other and work together to face these challenges in positive and innovative ways that can support the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Complex cities

Achieving sustainable cities and communities relies on a number of interconnected factors. People are central. Involving people in shaping, developing and improving their communities not only helps planners to understand and respond to their needs, but empowers communities to take ownership and pride in their place. This in turn helps to reduce crime which can be motivated by disengaged and excluded communities. UN-Habitat states that 'Inadequate urban environments that exclude some members of society from the benefits of urbanization and participation in decision-making and development motivate crime'⁶.

Safety / inclusive cities

'Safer Cities Nairobi' was an initiative set up as part of the UN-HABITATS Safer Cities Programme in response to increasing crime rates in the city. This was not only impacting the sense of security for people living in the city, but also the reputation for people visiting. A survey undertaken as part of the project established that 37% of residents had encountered robbery crime and 22% theft in the previous year⁷. Public spaces can be intimidating for many vulnerable groups, particularly where they are not well used, feel unsafe or difficult to navigate.

As part of this initiative, the Public Space project was established to upgrade 60 areas across Nairobi to create safe, inclusive and accessible public spaces which take into account the needs of different groups including women, children, the elderly, disabled people and vulnerable and marginalized groups.

A critical component of creating inclusive spaces is understanding and reflecting the needs of everyone. Involving vulnerable and local groups in designing public spaces is a key part of supporting inclusiveness and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals now and in the future.

Planners play a central role in ensuring that new and existing public areas do not restrict the free use of space and can support different uses, prioritise pedestrians and provide a safe and accessible place for everyone. Going forward, young planners can continue to reinforce these principles in the provision of public spaces.

⁴ UN-HABITAT, *Implementing the Urban Agenda* (<http://nua.unhabitat.org/>)

⁵ The Planner, 2018. *Interview: Dy Currie, president of the Commonwealth Association of Planners* (https://www.theplanner.co.uk/features/interview-dy-curry-president-of-the-commonwealth-association-of-planners-0?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_term=

⁶ UN-HABITAT (<https://unhabitat.org/urban-themes/safety/>)

⁷ UN-HABITAT Safer Cities Nairobi Initiative (Phase I) (<http://mirror.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=670&catid=206&typeid=13>)

Resilient / Sustainable

Whilst cities cover just 3% of the world's land cover, they consume 60 – 80% of its energy consumption and produce 75% of its carbon emissions⁸ and are putting increasing pressure on water resources⁹. In addition, climate change is having an adverse impact on many countries within the Commonwealth with cases of drought and extreme weather events.

Drought and climate change have been significant issues for the city of Cape Town which has encountered acute water shortages in conjunction with the population doubling over the last 20 years. The extensive water infrastructure developed over previous decades had previously been successful, however has proved insufficient in recent years. As a result, a city wide Water Resilience Plan has been developed setting out both long and short term aims for managing the water and build resilience. The Resilience Plan includes initiatives including improving efficiencies in the water supply system, improving catchment infrastructure outside of Cape Town and improving the management and use of storm water¹⁰. Water resilience is just one measure needed in many Commonwealth cities to respond to and manage the impacts of climate change and build resilience. Examples such as this are becoming more widespread.

Young planners are facing some of the greatest challenges in dealing with impacts of climate change through their careers. Whilst our understanding of climate change is improving all the time, being innovative and planning to minimise emissions, manage resources effectively and ensure developments are designed to be resilient to environmental and climate conditions will be a common theme for urban planning in the Commonwealth. For young planners, working together and sharing experiences of successful (and unsuccessful!) practice is central in addressing these challenges and building more resilient and sustainable cities.

Looking forward

Young planners in the Commonwealth are the next generation who will be influence how our cities and environments change and develop in the future. We have the opportunity to learn from what has gone before, as well as provide new perspectives and innovative solutions to the challenges of the 21st century. Cities are changing at a rapid speed and we need to keep up with this change and continue to find ways of making planning systems fit for purpose to improve the quality of living and resilience of cities across the Commonwealth for everyone. By working together, sharing good practice and developing tools that can be used across the Commonwealth, young planners can make a difference.

One challenge highlighted by a recent survey undertaken by CAP is the shortage of planners in countries most affected by rapid urbanisation and climate change. This provides a significant challenge for these countries, and this is an issue that young planners need to support now and in the future. Developing forums to share experiences and develop solutions with other planners across the Commonwealth to help to provide support where it is most needed.

⁸ UN (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>)

⁹ UN (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>)

¹⁰ Cape Town Green Map, 2017. *WATER CRISIS: Cape Town's water resilience plan*
<http://www.capetowngreenmap.co.za/blog/water-crisis-cape-town%E2%80%99s-water-resilience-plan>

In addition, a program to support opportunities for young planners to work in urban planning across Commonwealth Countries could also help cities in need and enable young planners to broaden their experience and support the aspirations of creating sustainable cities and communities. The scope of this may be limited and other mechanisms to support the challenges of countries encountering rapid urbanisation are needed.

Developing urban planning tools and guidance to address specific urban planning issues across the Commonwealth could also be part of a solution. An excellent example is the Rapid urbanisation toolkit developed by the Prince's Foundation and CAP. The toolkit provides a streamlined methodology to guide sustainable growth in rapidly urbanising areas and is a successful way of a system that can be used by any authority or city region to develop a plan for their area. Young planners can play a role in supporting the creation and development of other transferable tools such as this to deal with other issues such as climate change issues or infrastructure.

Young planners will be the planning leaders of the future. We need to continue to build on the successes that have happened but work even harder to deal with the planning challenges faced by the Commonwealth cities that are encountering unprecedented in-migration, urban informality and climate change impacts.