

Boda boda rider
Eric, 24, has stopped
harassing girls



PLAN
INTERNATIONAL

**URBAN
HUB**



INTRODUCTION TO THE

URBAN

**RESEARCH
SERIES**

**LEARNING FOR BETTER
URBAN PROGRAMMING**

URBANISATION IS ACCELERATING

In 2007 the world reached a significant milestone. For the first time, according to a United Nations estimate, there were more people living in urban areas than people living in rural areas.¹ Since then, urbanisation has only accelerated. Current estimates show that over 56 per cent of the global population lives in cities, - that is approximately 4.3 billion people.²

Differences in urbanisation are evident across regions and income groups. For example, cities are growing most rapidly in Africa and Asia. Over 80 per cent of the population in Europe, Australia, the Americas, Japan and the Middle East already live in urban areas.³

Urbanisation is said to bring substantive benefits, mainly relating to living conditions. Safe drinking water and clean fuels for cooking are more readily available in urban areas. Urban areas also tend to have better sanitation and better provision of services such as education and healthcare.

PLAN INTERNATIONAL'S URBAN PROGRAMMING

While Plan International originally focused on rural settings, its activities in urban spaces have continued to grow and the organisation now has over 30 years of experience in urban programming. An initial review of programmes and activities, published in 2021, shows that in 2020 alone Plan invested at least 26 million euros in over 240 urban programmes.

However, inequality also tends to be high in urban areas. Globally, one in five urban residents live in slum-households.⁴ These residents lack the most basic needs.⁵ They may not have durable housing or rights as occupiers, sufficient living space (no more than three people sharing a room) or access to safe and affordable water and sanitation. In countries experiencing conflict or fragility the situation is starker, with one in two urban residents living in slums or informal settlements.⁶

Furthermore, populations in urban areas are on average younger and more mobile than in rural areas. Over 60 per cent of urban populations are under 18 years old.⁷ Children and young people living in cities and low-income settings are particularly vulnerable.

This review formed a key part of the *Urban Mapping Report*,⁸ which shows that over 85 percent of Plan International's country offices undertake programming and activities in urban areas. Urban programming occurs across all regions and thematic priorities, including within development, humanitarian and sponsorship activities. The main thematic areas addressed by urban programmes focus on young people as active drivers of change, inclusive quality education, employment and protection from violence.

THE URBAN HUB

Responding to the global urbanisation trend, Plan International established its own Urban Hub. This is a global platform for coordinating the sharing and expansion of good practice across programming and influencing activities in urban contexts. The Urban Hub is active across all Plan International offices, with the aim of uniting and expanding our urban expertise.

Across its programming, as well as monitoring, evaluation, research and learning, the Urban Hub prioritises four core focus areas:

- 1 Urban resilience building** – anticipation, recovery, adaptation and transformation
- 2 Youth participation** – inclusive decision making
- 3 Economic empowerment** – diversified opportunities
- 4 Reducing urban violence** – ensuring safety and access to justice

The four core focus areas prioritise gender transformation, civil society strengthening, multi-sectoral engagement and a human rights framework, they are complemented by three cross-cutting enabling activities:

Building capacity in urban programming across the organisation, including effective and insightful monitoring, evaluation, research and learning.

Developing effective partnerships and mobilising resources to support the hub's activities.

Collaborating with other global agencies and organisations, as well as international non-governmental organisations, to advance urban innovation.

THE URBAN RESEARCH SERIES

Starting in 2022 we will publish a series of urban research reports, to learn from past experiences and share learning from urban programming internally and externally.

Initially, the series builds on data from one innovative urban programme - The Safe and Inclusive Cities (SAIC) programme. SAIC was implemented across Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe between 2018 and 2021. Targeted at 15 to 25-year-olds, the SAIC programme focused on issues of urban violence, youth economic opportunities, social cohesion and civic participation. The integrated programming approach uniquely and directly targeted the multiple drivers of urban fragility which arise in urban contexts.

The SAIC programme conducted thorough research and collected data at three time-points. This data provides evidence of the programme's impact and offers insights into policy and practice-relevant topics.

The Urban Research Series is intended as the basis of ongoing analysis and learning from Plan International's extensive urban programming and influencing activities. The research will support the expansion and scale-up of urban work, enable innovative partnerships with external stakeholders, and support the realisation of the New Urban Agenda within the Sustainable Development Goals.



Jackie, 21, is fighting for girls' rights in Kampala

ANTICIPATED INITIAL PRODUCTS AS PART OF THE URBAN RESEARCH SERIES

The Urban Research Series will initially include a brief and four linked reports.

An introductory four-page brief on Plan International's innovative urban work.

This brief describes the activities of the Safe and Inclusive Cities programme and the Safer Cities for Girls programme, including similarities and differences, as well as links to further reading.

REPORT I

What are safe and inclusive cities?

This report, includes reflections on what constitutes urban fragility, using examples from Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe. We discuss how the Safe and Inclusive Cities programme addressed urban fragility and how local youth and stakeholders received the programme, concluding with insights into programme impacts and scalability.

REPORT II

Safe and inclusive cities tackle violence and fragility

This report focuses on violence in the four SAIC programme countries and identifies effective strategies for tackling violence in urban contexts. We consider who is most affected by violence in urban areas and how social capital, youth employment and civic participation impact on the prevalence of violence, paying particular attention to the needs and experiences of young women.

REPORT III

Civic participation fosters safe and inclusive cities

Participating in youth groups and engaging in civic life can have many benefits, including ensuring youth have access to local duty-bearers, are more aware of their rights and local opportunities, and can meaningfully participate in their communities' decision-making. This report focuses on the extent to which the SAIC programme fostered such benefits and looks at how engagement in civic life relates to urban fragility. We also discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on social cohesion and participation, and note how this relates to the wellbeing of girls and young women.

REPORT IV

The link between employment and safe and inclusive cities

Young people in low-income cities are particularly vulnerable and some resort to crime to meet basic needs. This report outlines how the SAIC programme helped make local youth more employable. We consider the barriers to achieving decent work conditions across diverse contexts. The report concludes with insights into valued opportunities in urban spaces, including entrepreneurship.

“Over 60 per cent of urban populations are under 18 years old. Children and young people living in cities and low-income settings are particularly vulnerable.”

ENDNOTES

- 1 Official definitions of urban spaces seek to relate cities and urban areas to the development of high and dense physical infrastructure (e.g. housing, business premises), population levels (both absolute population numbers and density) or specific geographic boundaries. Plan International acknowledges that urban can refer to both spaces and settings (in which case we refer to a place and context of where programmes take place) and the broader ecosystem that exists in cities (including specific relationships and networks, social systems and norms among others).
- 2 The World Bank Group (2022) World Bank Data on Urban Population 1960-2020. Available from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL> Accessed 01 March 2022
- 3 Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser (2018) - "Urbanization". Published online at OurWorldInData.org. Available from: <https://ourworldindata.org/urbanization> Accessed 01 March 2022
- 4 United Nations, Overview of the Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities. Available from: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/Overview/> Accessed 01 March 2022
- 5 Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser (2018) - "Urbanization". Published online at OurWorldInData.org. Available from: <https://ourworldindata.org/urbanization> Accessed 01 March 2022
- 6 The World Bank Group (2022) Data Bank, World Development Indicators: Population Living in slums (% of urban population). Available from: <https://databank.worldbank.org> Accessed 01 March 2022
- 7 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2014) Urban and Rural Population by Age and Sex, 1980-2015. Available from: <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa> Accessed 01 March 2022
- 8 Plan International's Urban Landscape (2021) Urban Programming and Influencing Activities across the Federation (internal report).

ENGAGING WITH THE URBAN HUB

IF YOU ARE:

- a professional active in urban youth and violence programming
- a donor or policy maker interested in effective and impactful programming in urban areas, or
- a researcher working on urban issues

PLEASE FOLLOW THE URBAN RESEARCH SERIES AND GET IN TOUCH WITH US!

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