2022 GHANA URBAN FORUM

Labadi Beach Hotel, Accra | October 31 - November 01

REPORT ON FORUM PROCEEDINGS

MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT DECENTRALISATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Acronyms

Acronym	Entity
ESAa	Ecologically Sensitive Areas
GARID	Greater Accra Resilient and Integrated Development project
GFDRR	Global Fund for Disaster Reduction and Recovery
GIA	Ghana Institute of Architects
GIE	Ghana Institute of Engineers
GIP	Ghana Institute of Planners
GIS	Ghana Institute of Surveyors
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
ILGS	Institute of Local Government Studies
KNUST	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
MDAs	Ministries, Departments, and Agencies
MLGDRD	Ministry of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal, District Assemblies
MWH	Ministry of Works and Housing
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NUP	National Urban Policy
PHC	Population and Housing Census
PWDs	Persons with Disability
WB	World Bank

1.0   Purpose of Report

The Government of Ghana through the Ministry of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development (MLGDRD) organised the Ghana Urban Forum (GUF) 2022 to offer practitioners, opinion leaders, civil society, and ordinary Ghanaians a say in the governance of their communities and urban spaces. The Ministry also sought to leverage the biennial Forum to engage stakeholders and receive inputs that would inform the National Urban Policy currently under review. The purpose of this document is to present a report of the Forum activities and outputs thereof.

2.0   Organisation

2.1   Forum venue and participants
The Forum was held from 31st October to 1st November 2022 at the Labadi Beach Hotel, Accra. Approximately 180 participants attended the conference daily, including Chief Executives from Metropolitan, Municipal and District assemblies (MMDAs), policy implementers from various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), academia, civil society, development partners, think thanks, local governance experts, urban development practitioners, private sector, and the media.

2.2   Delivery
The Forum employed a mix of presentations and panel discussions followed by plenary sessions that allowed participants to ask questions. Participants also had the opportunity to join breakout sessions of their choice to further engage with development experts across different disciplines. The conference was livestreamed on Facebook and Zoom for participants who could not attend in person, and organisers utilised the Slido app to get real-time interactive feedback from participants. The programme was ably moderated by Dr. Esther Ofei-Aboagye, renowned public administration and local governance consultant.

2.3   Forum Theme
The Forum was held under the theme "*Rapid Urban Growth in Ghana: promoting effective urban planning for liveable and sustainable cities and towns.*" Organisers hoped to start a national discourse around sustainable urban growth, and more importantly, define urban areas beyond a population threshold.

3.0   Opening Session

3.1   Chairman's Remarks
The Forum was chaired by **Emeritus Professor Kwasi Kwafo Adarkwa**, accomplished scholar and renowned professional scholar from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. He noted that GUF was an offshoot of the World Urban Forum organised by the United Nations to address the impact of rapid urbanisation on communities, cities, and economies, as well as the impact of climate change and related policies. The Forum theme, ensuing discussions and papers presented would hopefully lay out standards for planning, construction, developments and improving human settlements

in urban areas. The National Urban Policy and action plans could be updated to reflect the resultant inputs of the Forum. Beyond this, the Forum could be a platform for promoting sustainable urban growth, perhaps by bringing on board the private sector in the delivery of urban services. None of these expectations could be fully met without a new definition of "urban areas" that exceeded the population criterion. He urged participants to find collective solutions to urban challenges and wished all fruitful deliberations.

3.2   Welcome Address
Hon. Nii Noi Adumuah (Municipal Chief Executive, Adentan Municipal Assembly) read the welcome message on behalf of **Hon. Henry Quartey**, Greater Accra Regional Minister, who had a conflicting assignment. He commended MLGDRD for instituting the Forum to address development issues and promote good urban governance and commended development partners for their continuous support over the years. Ghana's population, as in the rest of Africa, is becoming increasingly urbanised. More than 40% of Ghanaians dwell in a city or town of more than 5,000 people, the statistical cut-off for determining an urban area. The 2021 Population and Housing Census (PHC) showed the Greater Accra Region to be the most urbanised region with 91.7% of its population living in urban centres. The research, data, knowledge, innovation, and information generated at the Forum would help to address the challenges of rapid urbanisation across Ghana; roles and responsibilities at all levels would also be spelt out to strengthen town and cities to be smart, resilient, productive, inclusive and liveable. The Greater Accra Regional Coordinating Council would support MLGDRD to achieve the overall objective of a strategic urban policy that meets the needs and aspirations of Ghanaians. He welcomed all participants and urged them to contribute by sharing ideas on best practices to promote effective urban development.

3.3   Messages from Development Partners
Catherine Lynch stated that the World Bank is pleased to be a sponsor of the Ghana Urban Forum, with funding from the Global Fund for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, to promote effective urban planning for sustainable, liveable cities and towns. The Bank would contribute its expertise to the update of the National Urban Policy, having worked with the Government of Ghana for decades in the urban and related sectors nationwide, and seeking to further to enhance the impact of collaborative projects. Specialists from the Bank would contribute to panel discussions on the definition of urban areas, financing for urban infrastructure, and the role of cities in adapting to climate change, notably a presentation on the Ghana Country Climate and Development Report. This report addresses the key role cities play in Ghana's transition to a climate-resilient and low-carbon development pathway.

His Excellency Charles Abani, UN Resident Coordinator for Ghana, noted that the national urban population of 57.3% was a reality check on the system to leverage the opportunities urbanization present and gain much-needed developmental benefits. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed and amplified the disproportionate impacts on vulnerable and marginalised groups in urban areas. Government and implementing agencies must invest in preparedness, assess vulnerability and shocks and transformation for resilience against disaster, disease, and climate change. In the context of increased inflation and supply chain disruptions, policy makers must make social, economic, environmental, and other resilience the foundation for urban development and governance. The New Urban Agenda must be mainstreamed into local assembly plans to tackle inequality and vulnerability, and to achieve the desired urban paradigm shift. Smaller and intermediate cities must receive the requisite attention as they are vulnerable to external shocks and can potentially foster better rural-urban linkages.

The significant increase in youth living in Ghana's urban areas calls for investment in education including sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence, technical and vocational skills, as well as employment creation, recreation, and community facilities. Partnerships with the private sector and civil society will be key to achieving these aims, as could the UN-Habitat Smart SDGs approach as an implementing framework.

3.4   Address from Minister of Works and Housing

Hon. Francis Asenso-Boakye reminded participants that Ghana has made international commitments to the World Urban Forum to meet certain SDGs in less than eight (8) years. Previous editions of the Forum inspired the National Urban Policy in 2012 and the National Housing Policy in 2015 and the 2022 Forum was expected to proffer urban planning solutions that would aid Ghana in meeting its international commitments. The Ministry of Works and Housing (MWH) believes affordable housing must be prioritised as a basic need, and more action is needed to further reduce and eventually eliminate the housing deficit which stood at 1.8 million units in the 2021 PHC, especially for low and middle-income earners. Urban planners and policy makers must explore sectoral issues to build the needed linkages and robust framework. The Ministry is setting up a National Housing Authority that will be empowered to regulate, plan, and implement housing programmes that meet the needs and financial aspirations of Ghanaians. Going forward, MLGDRD must strengthen its collaboration with MWH and all other stakeholders to create planned, liveable and sustainable cities in Ghana.

3.5   Keynote address

The keynote address delivered by **Hon. Daniel Botwe**, Minister for Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development. Inputs from the Ghana Urban Forum, since inception in 2009, have influenced several national policies, action plans and programmes to shape the urban agenda in Ghana. The 2022 observance of World Cities Day under the theme "Act Local to Go Global" sought to empower local and regional governments to create greener, more equitable and sustainable cities, and dovetailed perfectly with the aims of 2022 GUF. Ghana's rapid urbanisation has resulted in congestion, urban sprawl, encroachment into ecologically sensitive areas (ESAs), inadequate public transport services and infrastructure among other challenges. Presentations and discussions at the Forum were expected to provide concrete and innovative solutions to maximise the opportunities presented by urbanisation while minimising its challenges. He noted that the 5,000 people cut-off for defining urban areas was insufficient and challenged participants to come up with an expansive definition fit for Ghana's current context.

The government has implemented a range of ongoing interventions to support cities and assemblies in urban development, including the Ghana Secondary Cities Project in 25 municipalities and the Ghana Urban Mobility and Accessibility Project in the Greater Accra Region. The Ministry also developed the National Rural Development Policy in 2019 since rural development has a direct impact on the rate of urbanisation. Cabinet has also directed that the Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority (LUSPA) be transferred under MLGRD to strengthen the role of MMDAs in urban planning and control and ensure each development plan has a corresponding spatial plan that is monitored and enforced for sustainable urban development.

The ministry plans to hold a detailed media engagement in November 2022 to share the Forum outcomes and deeper analysis of the 2021 PHC, so these can be relayed to the larger populace.

MLGDRD remains grateful for the partnership with development partners, academia, and other stakeholders.

4.0   Presentation and Panel Discussion Highlights

4.1   Rapid Urban Growth in Ghana: Promoting Effective Urban Planning for Liveable and Sustainable Cities and Towns
Presenter: **Kodjo Mensah-Abrampa**, (Director General, NDPC)

The characteristics of a liveable and sustainable urban space are seen in the residents' quality of life and opportunities to maximise their potential through employment, security, responsive local governance, affordable public mobility, infrastructure, reliable social services, and environmental protection and justices in a self-sustaining city.

Some highlights of Ghana's urban development story are presented in figures below:
- Unemployment (2021): National **7.8%**; Urban **8.3%**; Rural **7.0%**
- "Affordable Housing" (2017): only affordable **to 35%** of income earners
- Slum dwellings (2020): **8.76 million** residents (declined from **39.3**% in 2017 to **28.2%** in 2020)
- Govt expenditure for housing & amenities: **0.79%** in 2018; **0.72%** in 2019; **0.31%** in 2020
- Access to safely managed water (2020): **60.3%** urban access; pipe-borne **34%** in urban areas
- Household toilets (2020): **59.3%** national; **65.9%** urban; **49.1%**
- Renewable Energy use: **47.3%** in 2017 to **40.4%** in 2020
- Internet access (2021): **31.4%** National; **20.4%** Urban and **46.2**% Rural lack access

Ghana has lacked direction, focus, coordination, harmonisation, complementarity, results orientation, and defined procedures in implementing its urban agenda over the years. Rather the nation has contended with conflicts, lack of clarity, lack of defined results, lack of sustained impact and no defined regulations. At the institutional level, overlapping roles and responsibilities, undefined mandates, unpredictability, poor relationships, broken-down systems and working in silos has rendered MDAs largely ineffective in managing the urban development agenda. The challenge of capacity in linking policy to space; anticipating citizens' behaviour, coordinating inter-disciplinary action; facilitating political-technical dialogues; and harnessing citizens' participation remain unresolved. Financial resources have also been largely inadequate, hard to mobilise, unreliable and yielded little tangible result. Inadequate fiscal authority, inability to balance budget through proper prioritisation and accountability challenges have all constrained the financing of urban planning and development. Implementation challenges of overlaps, gaps, poor scheduling, timing delays and wastage, as well as poorly defined objectives, targets and indicators have made it difficult to properly monitor and evaluate urban planning projects.

There are successful cases both at home and abroad: Assin Kushia in the Assin South District of the Central Region in Ghana; Kigali, Rwanda; and Vancouver in Canada. These urban spaces prove that leadership; defined visions directing planning and investment and shared with citizens; effective community engagement; application of data management and technology; and effective monitoring and

feedback can create thriving, sustainable, and liveable towns and cities. Figure 1 outlines some of the steps Ghana can utilise in realising this goal:

Develop **concerted and factual Urban Policy** based on National Development Framework

Clarify institutional roles and responsibilities

Capacitate urban planners with **requisite knowledge and practical skills**

Decentralise fiscal system (subsidiarity is key)

Invest in technology for effective and efficient information-gathering and data generation

Move national spatial development frameworks (SDFs) from "**websites to action**"

Correct deficits of regional SDFs and structure plans

Define National Action Plan for implementing NUP into **phases** for easy monitoring and accountability

Make decisions based on **reliable information**

Create a **flagship project** on urban planning?

Figure 1 Steps to Creating Liveable and Sustainable Cities in Ghana

4.2 Panel Discussion: Achieving SDG 11 by 2030

Moderator: **Remy Sietchiping** (UN-Habitat)

Panellists: **Prof. Charles Adams** (GIE); **Mohammed Alhassan** (GIP); **Dr. Gabriel Nani** (GIS); **Arc. Foster Osae-Akonnor** (GIA)

Prof. Adams emphasised the importance of data collection, analysis, and sharing in effective urban policy planning and implementation. Technology could also be leveraged to improve transport times, and consequently waste management and employment due to the knock-on effect. GIE stands ready to play its part in moving Ghana's urban agenda forward.

Mr. Alhassan was dismayed by the unwillingness of local assemblies to use their assigned powers to remove illegal structures and prevent encroachment on community rights. The cities of the future require electricity, water, waste management, and ICT infrastructure that must be planned today and the MMDAs are key implementers. Local assemblies can mobilise citizens to help the development agenda by incentivising wealthy citizens to improve infrastructure, perhaps through tax reliefs.

For **Mr. Sietchiping**, while land has always been a very important resource, it has also been the source of conflict and other ills and thus needs proper management.

Dr. Nani focused on infrastructural development as a collective effort of government and private individuals, especially housing, which needs strong regulations and controls to ensure holistic development that harmonises the natural and built environments. Technology could improve citizens access to land details before purchase, speed up building permit applications, and clarify land boundaries and usage information. Development plans must identify and consider subterranean services with the same importance as aboveground infrastructure.

Mr. Osae-Akonnor questioned whether the numerous architects in Ghana were given the opportunity to effectively contribute to city development by MMDAs. Some local assemblies use accounts officers as planning officers, whereas others lack a planning or works department altogether. GIA will commit to ensuring every local assembly has one architectural firm to ensure the realisation of the desired cities and town.

The panellists hoped for the following to be factored into the new National Urban Policy: serous dedication to continuous professional development, more focus on effective implementation, resource efficiency and collaboration, and improvement of working conditions for professionals at the local assembly. They also hoped that "municipalities" would have basic/adequate infrastructure in place to qualify for that classification.

4.3   Conversion of Ecologically Sensitive Zones for Urban Infrastructure–GAMA as a case study

Presenter: **Dr. Kwadwo Ohene Sarfoh** (GARID Project)

Environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs) are vital to the long-term maintenance of biological diversity, soil, water, or other natural resources both on the site and in a regional context. These areas serve as important green infrastructure and complement grey infrastructure by managing surface and stormwater, controlling air quality, and providing thermal comfort. The Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA) has been transformed by a factor of three (3) in the last 30 years: tripling in population (1.7 million in 1990 to 4.5 million in 2020) and contiguous area (1,520 sq.km total area in mid 1980s against 5,000sq.km in 2022), while population density has declined to a third of what it was in 1990 (123 persons per hectare) to 41 persons per hectare.

This rapid transformation has come at a cost. The unchecked triple threat of sand winning, sand filling and land clearing (of topsoil) have resulted in severe environmental degradation. Diversion of waterbodies for development, as has happened to sections of the Onukpawahe stream, impacts the speed of runoff and can cause flooding. Other waterbodies have been blocked, such as the Mamahuma stream, so there is less room for runoff. Where not diverted, water bodies are shrinking, which also means there is less capacity for run-off conveyance. In the northeast of Accra, declining foliage between Ayi Mensah and Peduase have led to surface runoff entering the basins faster and in higher volumes as infiltration capacity diminishes. Rapid building also has killed the stream and source of the naturally occurring spring which gave its name to the Pure Water neighbourhood in Agboba.

Ghana signed the Ramsar Convention in 1988 and developed the Coastal Management Plan in 1991 as well as a National Wetlands Conservation Strategy in 1999. None of these prevented the Tema Development Corporation (TDC) from surfacing and selling off a section of the clearly demarcated Ramsar site for development. The least distance between two buildings around the outflow in 2003 measured approximately 2,150 meters; this reduced to 1,650 meters in 2021, a reduction of about 500 meters. Proposed detention ponds under the GARID project at the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission site were meant to guarantee a 1-in-10-year flood protection system (with proposals for East, South and West Ponds). The South Pond was originally a floodplain for a stream but has now been sold off to developers who undertook extensive filling to enable construction, including for two churches. This deliberate constriction of the stream has halved its width from 13.28m in 2015 to 7.28m in 2022.

The state of most ESAs is a function of what happens to the soil; sand (and its use for construction) requires urgent attention. Sand and its use in construction in developing countries influences the changing urban form and cities, with sand heaps often used as markers of ownership on undeveloped lands for prospective developers. Yet several instruments to address land use and ESAs are in place: laws, policies, plans, programmes and project interventions. With emerging climate change considerations, even more policies, plans, commitments and intentions and more specific actions, timelines, and budgets (water resources management, improving management and resilience of terrestrial, aquatic and marine ecosystems) have been promulgated.

GAMA stands on a precipice due to the focus on low-density development (one man, one plot approach); a fixation on grey infrastructure as it is synonymous with success; and an unwillingness to recognize that the threat to ESAs and nature is a threat to the existence of the citizenry and leads to industrial-level destruction of ecological systems. A constellation of maximisers threatens ESAs even more, including an inadequately housed growing urban population, market-radicalized customary institutions, inhibited bureaucrats afraid of victimisation, and rent-seeking promoters of public infrastructure investments. These factors all work against the commons ESAs and undermine empirical knowledge informing climate change policies. The available, tacit knowledge in traditional customs and folklore which preserve ESAs (taboo days, sacred groves etc) are underutilised, and there is a dissonance between policy and practice where local-level implementers do not apply the principles of (non-responsive?) ESA policies and commitments. There are also seemingly no narratives strong enough to overcome market arguments in favour of the retention of ESAs.

Urgent action is required to reverse the threats to ESAs, since climate change has resulted in unpredictable frequency and intensity of rainfall, sea level rise, heat, and drought. With the GAMA population expected to double 2010 levels by 2035, all stakeholders must develop innovative solutions to land access, housing development and protection of ESAs. Focus should be on building up, not out, and local governments must actively influence local housing markets. More, and less, ESAs are needed to complement the investments in grey infrastructure for a sustainable present and future. Civil society is also largely absent in built environment advocacy and activism, showing incidental interest only after disasters.

4.4   Panel Discussion: Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction
Moderator**: Dr. Benedicta Fosu-Mensah** (IESS-UG)
Panellists: **Dr. Kwadwo Ohene-Sarfoh** (GARID Project) **Catherine Lynch** (World Bank), **Dr. Daniel Nukpeza** (IESS-UG)

Dr. Ohene-Sarfoh was concerned that climate change and its consequences would shrink the living space available to the urban poor, and lead to their existence in precarious areas prone to flooding, landslides, and other disasters. The lack of proper development planning has also resulted in rich people building in these precarious areas and being subjected to the same dangers as the poor. The failure of institutions to utilise the tools available to prevent harmful action had to be reversed, and a collaborative approach adopted since fragmented solutions do not work. The borough system in the UK could be worth emulating, since it provides for devolved responsibilities within an assembly. Communities who live close to ESAs could also protect these sites if they have direct benefits from the land.

For **Dr. Nukpeza**, the benefits ESAs provide in terms of water quality, ecosystem services, and fishery had to be communicated effectively before citizens could realise the implications if these sites were lost. The chasm between well-educated and grassroots people could be a factor in policies not working as envisaged on the ground. Radical rethinking, such as designating cemeteries as green spaces, is needed to prevent more vegetation loss in urban areas.

Ms. Lynch was concerned with the development of effective messages that would get audiences to care about the environment. Climate change for most Ghanaians is about the impact and negative consequences on human lives and finances, so messages for Ghanaian audiences could be focused on these. Preventing encroachment on ESAs cannot be handled at the district or municipal level and might even require regional intervention. Designating walking or running paths along ESAs is one way of maintaining the integrity of these sites. However, the underlying housing market and land management problems must be addressed to ensure effective change and prevention of ESA loss.

Emerging Issues from Plenary
1. Condominium ownership is not standard practice in Ghana, as most Ghanaians are unfamiliar with high rises and remain concerned with owning plots of land and not just apartments.
2. Flooding in Accra has occurred since the 1930s and further historical analysis is needed. Hard infrastructure is not the solution to Accra's perennial flooding problem, and more green zones need to be created to hold water.
3. Taxation could be a deterrent or sanction for breaching laws, while tacit official/bureaucratic complicity in encroachment of ESAs must be addressed.
4. Mandated institutions must harmonise their language and intent to eliminate the gaps exploited by wily individuals and developers.
5. Given population increases, underlying philosophy and approaches under policies and projects like the 1998 South East Green Belt project must be revisited to create green bands with no physical development. This could force developers to build upwards, and not outwards.
6. Environmental degradation results from greed and short-sightedness where people are willing to overlook the negative impact in light of immediate financial benefits.
7. Indigenous landowners and traditional authorities must be brought into urban planning discussions from conception to implementation as co-creators and co-implementers. Their capacities must also be built through exposure to workable/successful initiatives and options for managing natural legacies to economic advantage.
8. Civil society must be more engaged in the prevention of illegal construction in Ramsar sites and ESAs.

9. While MMDAs have legal mandates and authority to demolish illegal structures, they require more support to overcome social uproar and citizen unrest against their justified actions.
10. Private individuals could assert rights for the common good and sue for the protection and preservation of ESAs under public interest laws.

4.5 Sustaining Media Interest: Reflections on Mainstreaming Urban Reporting
Presenter: **Samuel Agyemang** (Metro TV)

Mr. Agyemang commended Hon. Botwe for his interest in urban development and efforts to bring the media on board but noted that more interventions were needed to rekindle the interest of journalists in these topics for onward dissemination to the public. The media is a key partner because despite a series of interventions by Government and development partners over the years, major challenges still remain in the urban development agenda.

Urban inclusivity remains a work in progress; whereas MDAs and politicians have tried to use sign language interpreters in most public gatherings and broadcasts, religious organisations and hospitals still do not offer this service. National documents in Braille are not widely available, and the lack of disability friendly public transport systems and wheelchair and cycle lanes disempower PWDs from living a full and productive life. The lack of alternative modes of urban transport like rail means Ghanaians are completely dependent on road transport, leading to gridlock traffic situations which worsen daily as the urban population grows without a corresponding increase in road and transport infrastructure. River and inland waterway transportation, as well as short sea shipping have not been fully embraced to enhance the movement of goods and people from north to south and vice versa.

There is a lack of interest in urban agriculture, and policies such as the "Operation Feed Yourself" may need to be re-introduced to encourage backyard gardening and improve green spaces in Ghana's urban areas. Urban sanitation reportage over the years does not appear to have yielded much result, with illegal liquid dumping being the norm in many places in the Greater Accra Region. Most urban centres also lack recreational and green spaces, and the beautification of Accra remains an unfulfilled dream. Hopefully efforts to recruit more staff to fill Parks and Gardens unit in the Physical Planning Departments of MMDAs will yield the desired results.

Access to potable water in urban Ghana is still very poor despite the enormous sums of Foreign Direct Investment brought in to improve the availability of potable water in urban areas. Slums continue to spring up, and efforts to remove squatters from unauthorized zones results in growing slums as no proper alternative settlement is provided to the evicted squatters. According to the 2021 PHC, 11% of Ghana's structures ae metal containers or kiosks.

The media play the important role of simplifying complex urban policies, issues, and subjects into easily digestible and understandable language, and reduce the disconnect between policy makers, implementers, and beneficiaries. The media also have a strong advocacy role in urbanisation issues, which can improve and enhance funding for rapid urbanisation in Ghana. This advocacy role can also help the public to understand the need to financially contribute to financing urban infrastructure. Understanding urban issues aids the media ask relevant questions and improve accountable governance in the urban space. The media can identify and create Urban Champions devoted to sustainable urban development.

However, both traditional and social media have become quite expensive to disseminate urban development reports effectively for the desired results. There is also a lack of training for journalists who seek to focus on urbanisation issues, as well as a lack of resources to support media campaigns on urban reporting.

To sustain interest in urban reporting, journalists must grow their interest in this field, and players in the urban space, both public and private, must recognise the need to develop the media's interest in urbanisation issues. The results of media reportage must be demonstrated to create further appetite for this content, and investments made in innovative partnership with the media to sustain initiatives and interest over time.

5.0   Highlights from Side Events (Day 1)

This section summarises the feedback from each breakout group on the first day of the Forum. Participants self-selected one of four thematic areas and had the opportunity to listen to research, case studies, evidence and presentations from experts that informed their contributions to the update of the National Urban Policy. The topics and speakers for each thematic area are listed in Appendix 1.

5.1   Thematic Area 1: Redefining Ghana's Urban Landscape
Moderator: **David Osei-Wusu** (ILGS)

- The definition of an urban area as a settlement of five thousand people or more came up in the context of the 1960 census and has been in use since then with modest variations.
- Ghana must shift from designating "glorified villages" as urban areas to a new, more meaningful definition that accounts for current context and realities; this new definition must be based on scientific evidence.
- Ghana needs an accelerated urban development programme.
- Urban planners need geospatial data with appropriate resolution; availability of data and maps can aid in developing algorithms. The dashboard approach can thus be used for analysing economic, environmental, and sustainable factors within the urban space.
- Policymakers and implementers must also consider functional complexities and multi-dimensional indices so that any area falling into the determined categories would qualify to be considered "urban."
- KNUST has done preliminary work on these indices; proposals/ baseline could be presented at proposed November 2022 meeting

5.2   Thematic Area 2: Rethinking Investments in Ghana's Cities and Towns
Moderator: **Dr. I.F. Mensa-Bonsu** (Planner, Accra)

- The increasing rate of urbanization requires investment in infrastructure and financing.

- The available options require capacity to access, hence the need for capacity building in project preparation to create bankable and marketed proposals.
- Tax policy (exemptions) work in some jurisdictions and could be used to promote investment even in Africa
- The informal crowd funding done in Ghana could be formalised as in other countries and leveraged for urban infrastructural projects.
- Financing for the redevelopment of the Kejetia Market in Kumasi was based on partnership between the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly and the Government of Brazil
- Project implementation requires acknowledgement of the social dimensions of the project; issues of displacement, evictions, negative impacts on those who will lose must be considered and social safeguards introduced.
- The Consolidated Local Governance Model used in Kigali and Istanbul is recommended for Ghana to improve its urban development agenda.
- Some local authorities should be able to team up for infrastructural development to benefit citizens.

5.3 Thematic Area 3: Co-designing and Connecting Ghana's Cities and Towns
Moderator: **Kwadwo Yeboah** (CEO, LUSPA)

- The case study of GAMA Structure Plan shows Ghana has enough plans and policies for urban development, implementation and implementation management must be carefully considered.
- Government must also consider whether the 29 assemblies within Greater Accra are serving the purpose for which they were created; in 1991, Greater Accra had only three (3); is a new governance approach needed?
- The issue of urban governance must be definitively answered either in favour of amalgamation or further fragmentation.
- The new Urban Policy should mandate that Assemblies share spatial plans and land-use database with relevant stakeholders, academics, and professional bodies. A repository of these plans and databases is needed at the LUSPA.
- Urban development should not be rammed through at the expense of rural areas, and the functional linkages between both must be recognised and considered for holistic development.
- The informality that results in citizens citing structures without authority should be seen as an opportunity and not a constraint.

5.4 Thematic Area 4: Innovating for Resilient Urban Spaces
Moderator: Jonathan Azasoo (NDPC)

- Ghana's land tenure system poses several challenges: land ownership issues, land tenure insecurity, difficulty of farmers adapting to climate change. Farmers have adopted coping mechanisms such as inheritance arrangements, transfer rights to farmlands, and ownership of small landholding as workarounds for these challenges.

- Farmers also adapt by cultivating early maturing crops, crop rotation, adoption of Zaï farming techniques, and other agroforestry practices.
- Policy makers must mainstream agriculture in physical planning and regulate land commodification in urban and peri-urban areas.
- Ghana is losing eco-systems because of emissions from peri-urban settlements and faces challenges of low growth due to climate change and illegal mining, pollution, and poor waste management.
- The above factors affect economic growth through loss of productivity and lower GDP.
- Infrastructure such as walkways and bicycle lanes should be developed, and waste management systems improved (perhaps through private sector involvement).
- Local market infrastructure and management must be improved to trace food sources. MMDAs operate markets which are not well managed and have poor security and inadequate infrastructure.
- Performance contracts must be signed with market management to control inflows of food.

6.0   National Stakeholder Engagement

These side events were meant to engage stakeholders on scoping the five (5) thematic subjects relevant to the Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion (SOCO) Project being implemented by MLGDRD and its partners. The outcome of these discussions would inform future programme design and investment decisions.

Participants self-selected one of the following thematic groups based on interest: Local Governance and Decentralisation; Climate Change; Social Cohesion, Conflicts and Migration of People; Local Economic Development for Women and Youth; and Digital Technologies and Innovation. All groups had to respond to five (5) key questions, and then a few extra questions based on the thematic subject. The results of the group discussions are presented in Appendix 2 and have been edited for clarity and brevity.

7.0   Conclusion to the Forum

Mr. S.S. Passah, (Director, MLGDRD) expressed gratitude to all participants, sponsors, organisers and resource persons for their engagement and contributions to a very successful edition of the Ghana Urban Forum.

In his closing remarks, **Emeritus Professor Adarkwah** indicated that there was considerable evidence for the need for urgent innovative action on better urban development solutions in Ghana. The Forum generated proposals to enrich the new NUP, including the need to use statistics effectively to plan and monitor urban development. The characteristics of sustainable and liveable cities provided a guide for what Ghana's urban development aspirations should look like, and the importance of coordinated and collaborative action between policy makers, researchers, professionals in relevant disciplines, service providers, CSOs and citizens emphasised. The new NUP must also pay attention to the needs of different sections of the population, including youth, women, and vulnerable groups.

Prof. Adarkwah believed that GUF2022 had fulfilled its objective by bringing together interested parties on a common platform for fruitful exchange, and expressed gratitude to the Minster, MLGDRD team, organisers and participants for a successful Forum.

Appendix 1: Thematic Areas for Side Events

Thematic Area	Topic/Speaker
1. *Redefining Ghana's urban landscape*	**Recalibrating the urban morphology of Ghana for effective urban policy formulation and implementation** Mohammed Alhassan **Defining Ghana's Cities: suggested approaches and lessons learnt** Harris Selod **A Reconsideration of the Criteria for Determination of Urban Areas in Ghana** Michael Ayertey Nanor
2. *Rethinking Investments in Ghana's Cities and Towns*	**Urban Infrastructure Financing and PPPs** Nathan Rono Tuimising **Urban Governance and the Implementation of the Kejetia Redevelopment Project in Kumasi, Ghana** Dr. Clifford Amoako **Appropriate Urban Governance and Coordination Model for Sustainable Cities: The Case for Ghana** Alfred Kwasi Opoku (FGIP)
3. *Co-designing and Connecting Ghana's Cities and Towns*	**Evaluation of Spatial Planning in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA) and its implications for sustainable urban development and management** Kekeli Kofi Amedzro **Negotiating Lands along Unused Railway Tracks in Kumasi—Confronting the Gaps in Urban Planning and the Management of State Lands** Aisha Adams **Urban governance and gentrification in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area, Ghana** David Anaafo (PhD)
4. *Innovating for Resilient Urban Spaces*	How do land tenure arrangements influence adaptive responses of farmers? A study of crop farmers in northwest Ghana Francis A, Akugre **Ghana Country Climate and Development Report (CCDR)** Lorenzo Carrera **Local Market Infrastructure and Management in the Accra Metropolis** Benjamin D. Ofori

Appendix 2: Results of NSE Group Discussions

Q1 **How can stakeholders improve data collection for better clarity and create a shared platform to monitor key indicators of socio-economic development, climate resilience, exposure to conflict and climate risks?**

1. Establish research & data management units staffed with trained personnel at all MMDAs.
2. Use smart tools with geo-referencing capabilities for data authentication and engage community-level volunteers in data collection
3. Agree on a common need and create a database of projects to identify data types and key indicators
4. Organise periodic, technical committee meetings with stakeholders for inputs/updates.
5. Understand the key climate change issues in Ghana and categorise the drivers and responsible actors for each.
6. Target data collection times/days for the convenience of stakeholders.
7. Use local languages for interviews/questionnaires.
8. Deploy comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan or matrix and involve local representatives under strict supervision.
9. Invest in and upgrade the capacities of the existing data collection institutions such as Births and Death Registry, NIA, GSS, academic institutions, MDAs and others.
10. Move to digitized questionnaires for faster and safer data collection, storage, and analysis.
11. Ensure inclusive data collection, especially for persons with disabilities who are mostly affected by climate change.
12. Collect data regularly to ensure up-to-date information that meets the needs of the current context.
13. Consider a database that is always open and accessible for data entry.

Q2 **How can stakeholders facilitate research around key issues related to bottlenecks and opportunities for social cohesion, cross-border trade and other economic opportunities?**

1. Involve stakeholders from planning to implementation to give them a sense of ownership.
2. Create safe spaces for feedback and dialogue in engaging with impacted segments of society.
3. Provide sub-regional trading platform to promote cross-border trade and eliminate import taxes and use of different currencies.
4. Engage with stakeholders at home and abroad through meetings, conferences and exchange programmes to learn best practices.
5. Collaborate with CSOs operating in geographic areas of interest.
6. Organize transformative scenario planning workshops to get more insights and pathways for research.
7. Provide adequate financing of research data collection, analysis and dissemination.
8. Mobilise diverse constituents, including community and faith leaders, effectively to understand the issues and develop pragmatic, grassroots solutions.
9. Find the root of bottlenecks in key issues and facilitate research in these areas.
10. Include community sensitization, townhall meetings and involvement of individual households as part of research efforts.
11. Develop research tools and questionnaires with questions that are relevant to respondents across borders.
12. Effectively utilise the academic talents at the University of Development Studies for in-depth research.
13. Identify and collaborate with technology and innovation organisations already operating in the space, as they have a lot of data.
14. Recognise the socio-cultural context and possible difficulties in accessing female respondents in closed off communities.

Q3   How can stakeholders create coalition of institutions interested in the socio-economic development of the project area?

1. Form focus group discussions in the project communities to solicit for input on the type of coalition institutions to be formed.
2. Establish public-private sector dialogue mechanisms both at the general and project levels.
3. Create structured, well-secured grievance and feedback mechanisms to address issues and build trust.
4. Inform citizens through print, electronic media, townhalls, and community information channels about the project and invite their participation on related thematic issues.
5. Create common for all stakeholders to share information and experiences and provide feedback.
6. Engage government, relevant institutions, civil society and other stakeholders to get project buy-in.
7. Create awareness among stakeholders through local media and traditional events about the threats and opportunities of socio-economic development issues to generate interest in collaborative problem-solving.
8. Improve coordination of activities of development partners, civil society and others by the DPCUs.
9. Identify the key sectors of the local economy and their contribution to local growth.
10. Establish a standing committee/ steering committee with representatives from relevant institutions for better coordination.
11. Cluster stakeholders according to knowledge area to ensure synergy and harmonization of thought.
12. Engage the RCCs.
13. Foster academic-professional collaboration and harness the power of CBOs already working in the project areas.
14. Seek innovative digital solutions from the National Information Technology Agency

Q4   How can stakeholders provide capacity building to national and regional institutions to promote dialogues?

1. Channel efforts through OHLGS, RCC and MMDAs to conduct needs assessment and regular in-service training.
2. Select members from the project area to be Trainer of Trainers who can be used at the national level after successful implementation of pilot project.
3. Participate in focal group discussions, training programmes and knowledge-sharing platforms at all levels.
4. Organize stakeholders into identifiable groups, and partner with solutions providers and targeted interest groups.
5. Ensure adequate funding solutions for sustainable engagement and awareness creation.
6. Document and disseminate the work done by stakeholders on websites and digital channels for feedback and engagement.
7. Organise lectures and trainings using resource persons part of the development interest groups to help train and update participants knowledge base.
8. Utilise the feedback and grievance mechanisms as well as the MIS systems of the various institutions.
9. Categorise the capacity gaps and develop strategies to resolve these.
10. Improve sharing of key lessons from various institutions.
11. Focus on building capacity of institutions outside the Greater Accra Region for equitable development.
12. Categorise regional and national institutions into zones for periodic training in the gaps identified.
13. Promote virtual trainings, meetings and workshops to cut down on expensive capacity building sessions.
14. Use technology to break the regional language barriers and create a common data dashboard.

Climate Change Thematic Group

Q1 **What are your major take aways?**

1. All stakeholders will be involved in the climate change action.
2. Digital tools are essential for data collection and planning
3. Climate Change is real, cannot be ignored, requires urgent action, must be mainstreamed, demands and involves action from all levels of society.
4. More stakeholder engagements needed on climate change, especially involving the vulnerable at the local level.
5. UNCDF has developed the LISA system (digital climate data hub) that could be leveraged on and scaled up to all MMDAs.
6. Climate change vulnerability assessments must be improved.
7. Infrastructure must serve the economic conditions of the poor.
8. Climate change education must be popularized at the local level.

Q2 **What policy and institutional framework exist for locally led climate action?**

1. National Energy Transition Framework
2. EPA, Forestry Commission, MMDAs, NGOs
3. National Housing Policy
4. Updated NDCs
5. NAP
6. Climate Change Strategy
7. Medium-Term Development Plans
8. Ghana National Climate Change Policy, 2013

Q3 **Which organizations are supporting or funding local-led climate action work? Are there any good examples/best practices or innovations that you could share?**

1. UNCDF Local Climate Adaptive Living (LoCAL) Facility
2. Government of Ghana
3. World Bank (Utility of the Future Programme)
4. Resilient Infrastructure in climate change (MESTI)
5. MMDAs
6. Volta River Authority
7. Department of Rural Housing
8. 350.org

9. Civil society
10. Arab Forum for Environment and Development
11. Asia Pacific Adaptation Network
12. African Development Bank
13. Climate Smart Agriculture
14. GCF

Q4   Who are the various government and non-governmental actors within the climate change space?

1. Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI)
2. MMDAs
3. Ministry of Health
4. EPA
5. Ministry of Environment
6. Friends of the earth and water bodies
7. FAO
8. Ministry of Food and Agriculture
9. World Bank
10. DUR
11. Civil society

Q5   What kind of data and research exist/are relevant for the implementation of climate change activities?

1. None
2. Climate change portal- world bank
3. Medium-term development plans of the various MDAs and MMDAs
4. NDCs

Q6   What digital tools or platforms exist and can be leveraged by the project to support locally led climate change/action?

1. weAdapt: an online open space platform for climate adaptation issues
2. Twitter
3. Facebook
4. Instagram
5. WhatsApp
6. Telegram

Q7   What platforms exist and can be leveraged by the project to foster dialogue on climate resilience? What gaps exist and how the project can fill them?

1. African Union Climate Change Action Plan 2022-2023
2. WhatsApp
3. Telegram

Social Cohesion, Conflicts and Migration of People Thematic Group

Q1   Identify and categorise Fragility, Conflict and Violence (FCVs) in the targeted regional areas.

1. Land ownership and management conflicts

Q2   Identify available data sources from research and other relevant studies on social cohesion, conflict prevention and migration.

1. University of Ghana (Center for Migration)
2. The Human Trafficking Secretariat of Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection
3. Ghana police service
4. PRAAD-National Archives
5. Chieftaincy Council
6. Kofi Annan Peace Center
7. IOM
8. National Peace Council –Mass Atrocities and Crime

Q3   **Identify key actors dedicated to social cohesion, conflict prevention and migration in the North of Ghana.**

Actors
1. Traditional authorities
2. Opinion leaders
3. Ghana Police Service
4. Ghana Immigration Service
5. Christian Council of Ghana

Roles
1. Serve as mediators in conflict management/resolution.
2. Promote social, and religious cohesion by rallying communities to work together on projects.

Areas of Operation
1. Tamale and other districts in the northern regions.

Local Economic Development for Women and Youth

Q1   What structures exist at the district to support LED?

1. LED committee and platforms
2. Department of Agric
3. Business Advisory Center (BACs); planning officers act in absence of BACs
4. DPCU
5. Sub-Committees
6. Department of cooperatives
7. Traditional Authorities

Q2   Who are the key actors working on LED in the North of Ghana?

1. MASLOC
2. MMDCEs, MMDCDs, and development planning officers at the local assemblies
3. Business development officers
4. Cooperative officers
5. Agriculture officers
6. Chair of LED sub-committee
7. Financial institutions
8. Civil society organisations
9. Business owners
10. Social welfare officers
11. National Youth Authority officials

Q3   What are the existing networks or platforms?

1. LED platforms

Q4   **What are the major LED interventions being implemented in the targeted project's regions? Who is funding and implementing these interventions**

Interventions
1. ID1F
2. Capacity development
3. Credit acquisition facilitation
4. Business support services
5. Ghana Productive Safety Net programme
6. DACF-RFG
7. IGG

Funders and Implementers
1. NGOs
2. Development Partners
3. MMDA
4. Central government

Q5   **Does the local government have the capacity to implement, monitor and sustain the LED interventions, what are the key capacity gaps and issues that the project should plan to address? How can the project address the capacity gaps?**

1. MMDAs have the personnel and established platforms but lack adequate funds and political will to implement LED activities.
2. Availability of LED Action Plan.
3. Support from local community.

Q6   **Examples/best practices: Are there any LED good examples/best practices or innovations that you could share?**

1. Light industrial site at Agona Ahanta
2. Mushroom project at Adenta
3. VSLA

Q7   **What are the key sectors (existing and potential) for promoting local economic development in the target regions and districts? Is there any existing menu of LED investments in the target district?**

1. Agriculture
2. ICT
3. Tourism
4. Trade and Commerce
5. Community development and CBOs

6. BACs
7. Transport

Q8   Digital tools/platforms: what digital tools or platforms exist to support LED?

1. E-commerce sites (Tonaton, Jiji, Facebook)
2. Money transfer platforms
3. Fintech apps
4. Mobile money
5. Zoom app for virtual training sessions

Q9   **Potential partnerships: Which potential organizations including private entities should the project explore?**

1. Financial institutions
2. Esoko
3. Traditional authorities
4. ILGS
5. MMDAs
6. University of Development Studies
7. NGOs
8. Civil society

Digital Technologies and Innovation Thematic Group

Q1   What are the national policy and institutional landscape for promoting digital technologies and innovations for inclusive service delivery and local economic development in Ghana?

1. Digital/tech start-up regulation/act?

Q2   Who are the various actors (Tech firms including start-ups), both governmental and non-governmental, academic institutions and the private sector that work on promoting digital technologies and solutions and what are their roles?

1. CIRSGIS
2. SAMBUS
3. IT Consortium
4. Ghana tech lab could provide helpful data on tech systems in northern Ghana.

Q3 **Which are the major projects/initiatives that focus on promoting key digital solutions and innovations for improving access to basic services and economic opportunities for vulnerable communities and groups in the Country.**

1. Agrocenta and similar tech firms and partner organizations are providing digital financial tech solutions for small-holder farmers in the northern parts of the country.
2. E-zwich cards deployed to the local community to improve on financial inclusion.

Q4 **Existing digital solutions and innovations to improve economic opportunities, local governance - infrastructure & services; climate resilience; and social cohesion/conflict prevention in Ghana.**

1. Import solutions which work in other places.
2. Complete Farmer (https://www.completefarmer.com)

Q5 **Which potential organizations including private entities should the project explore collaboration with, including for piloting digital solutions and innovations?**

1. MoFA
2. FAO
3. Ghana Tech Lab
4. Kudigo
5. Telecommunication companies
6. Mastercard Foundation
7. Agrocenta
8. GhIPSS
9. Broad Spectrum (provides fibre connections nationwide)