

**UN-HABITAT/ NIGERIA FEDERAL MINISTRY OF YOUTH  
DEVELOPMENT**

*Concept Paper*  
*MAY, 2011*

**African Urban Youth Assembly**

**THEME: “Youth and Prosperity of Cities”**

**Abuja, Nigeria**  
**June 28<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

## **1. Background**

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The World Urban Youth Assembly has become the leading global platform for youth to deliberate on urban issues. At the World Urban Forum in **Vancouver**, youth requested the establishment of a special fund to support youth-led initiatives in pursuance of the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals. At the 21st Session of the Governing Council in 2007, Governments passed Resolution 21/6 that established the Opportunities Fund for Urban Youth-Led Development. The Fund targets young people most in need of assistance and in particular the vulnerable youth in urban slums.

At the World Urban Forum in **Nanjing**, youth strongly emphasized that they wished to both be recognized for their work and expertise in local and international development, and to be included in policy development. Resolution 22/4, which was passed by Governments at the 22nd Session of the Governing Council, encourages governments to give priority and support to youth-led development initiatives and invites multilateral agencies, governments, the private sector and civil society to listen to youth and develop policies on their development based on participatory processes. The resolution further requests the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, to provide the necessary mechanisms for the World Urban Youth Assembly to be recognized as an integral part of the World Urban Forum.

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In Africa, there is overwhelming evidence of the risk factors among young people growing up in urban settings. Severe urban overcrowding and decay; increasing poverty and unemployment; family and community breakdown, on-going wars, effects of climate change; child and youth exploitation; and trans-national trafficking and crime are multiplying the security and range of risks to which young people in African cities are exposed. Young people are heavily affected by the absence of sustainable employment.

By 2015, the population aged 15-24 years in sub-Saharan Africa is expected to reach some 200 million, and the population aged 15-34 is projected to be 343 million. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world that has registered a sharp increase in the total number of young working poor (those subsisting on less than US\$ 1 per day).

Recognizing the gravity of this situation and in line with the proposed theme for the next World Urban Forum VI in Naples, Italy 2012 title: **“Prosperity of cities: Balancing Ecology, Economy and Equity”**, an African Urban Youth Assembly has been proposed

## **2. Objectives of the African Urban Youth Assembly**

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The general objectives of the African Urban Youth Assembly in Abuja are:

- a) to examine youth vision and position of the prosperity in cities;
- b) to gather and analyze youth contributions to prosperity in cities in the field of Ecology, Economy and Equity; and,
- c) to publish a report on youth participation to prosperity in cities in Africa.

With these goals as a point of reference, youth delegates will be better placed to provide input into the discussions and address the World Urban Forum 6 theme of **“Prosperity of cities: Balancing Ecology, Economy and Equity”**.

The specific objectives of the African Urban Youth Assembly are:

- a) to become the platform for African youth to discuss lessons learned from UN-HABITAT and partners’ programs in the area of urban youth led development
- b) profile and disseminate models of urban youth led development developed by UN-HABITAT and its partners
- c) become a platform for experts and practitioners to deliberate on research, policy and practice as well as lessons learnt on African urban youth issues

## **3. Structure of the Assembly**

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The structure of the African Urban Youth Assembly would be broken down into dialogues, training sessions, thematic open debate and other events. The dialogues must have a moderator who knows the subject and should be of high profile to attract active discussion and debate. Panelists should be representative of all major groups, the Academia, Policy Makers, Youth leaders, Grassroots groups, etc.

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#### **4. Key issues for the event**

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##### **a) African Youth : Vision and Position of Prosperity in Cities**

Youth vision and position of prosperity in cities is to examine factors that explain the prosperity of cities including infrastructure, human capital (youth skills), income composition, sector structure and policies and how all these are related to city demography especially women and urban youth. Due to contextual factors, the effects, and long run impacts of these factors will vary across cities and regions— a particular factor might be important in one region, but not in another. It is therefore important to discuss these factors in a comparative perspective drawing on examples from several cities across Africa.

##### **b) Equity: Distribution of wealth and opportunity**

Significantly, predetermined circumstances that lie outside the control of individuals and youths in particular tend to affect access to income, wealth and employment opportunities. Moreover, inequalities of opportunities tend not only to have path dependent characteristics, but also tend to be transmitted across generations. The objective is to focus on youth access to and economic opportunities in order to be able to contribute towards the prosperity of cities by focusing not just on income distribution but also on distribution of opportunities.

##### **c) Cities and Climate Change**

The green economy of urban area includes energy generation based on renewable energy which replaces fossil fuels, and energy conservation for efficient energy use. In terms of contributing to the prosperity of cities, the green economy can create jobs for youths through an energy efficient construction industry and retrofitting of existing buildings, sustainable transport, protecting vulnerable groups, reduce carbon dependency in urban areas, reduce degradation of the urban environment, contribute to achieving the MDGs— particularly poverty reduction, and ultimately contribute to achieving sustainable urban development. The objective is to promote a platform that will be able to interchange knowledge and experiences in Environment Management, in order to support youths in their responses to climate change impacts and environmental challenges. It is necessary to enhance consciousness and participation of the youth and to equip them with knowledge to better respond to the climate change affecting Africa.

##### **d) Urban Youth Employment and the Labour Market**

Urban areas by their nature have the potential to generate employment. Youth employment is a potential avenue out of poverty and an important step towards social integration. This topic will address the process by which urban areas create and nurture employment in different regions of the world. The nature of city employment and types of skills will also be examined. In so doing, it is important to discuss the nature of employment arising from the city building activities—

construction industry, infrastructure, housing; and as well in production and service sectors; the process by which urban areas create and nurture employment in different regions of the Africa.

## **5. Outcomes and Contributions of the Assembly**

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**Result 1:** Preparation of a comprehensive African Urban Youth position paper on employment and equity challenges to be presented to at the next World Urban Forum VI

**Result 2:** The preparation of key recommendations to governments aimed at attaining MDGs specific to economy, equity and climate change from an African Youth Perspective

**Result 3:** The participants acquiring new knowledge and sensitized thereby reinforcing (Strengthening) capacity of African Urban Youth organizations to engage on the key specific issue of urbanization and employments opportunities.