
Published 28 February 2025 by the University of KwaZulu-Natal
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Journal of Inclusive cities and Built environment. Vol. 5 Issue 8

How to cite: S. Medayese and J. Kamuzhanje. 2025. Editorial. *Journal of Inclusive cities and Built environment*. Vol. 5 Issue 8, Pg iii-v.

EDITORIAL: URBAN RESILIENCE AND PUBLIC HEALTH: NAVIGATING INFRASTRUCTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES IN AFRICAN CITIES

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Published 28 February 2025

INTRODUCTION

The complex interplay between urban development, public health, and environmental resilience in African cities presents both unprecedented challenges and opportunities for sustainable growth. As urban centers across the continent grapple with rapid urbanization, climate change impacts, and infrastructure demands, the need for integrated approaches to urban planning and development becomes increasingly apparent (Watson, 2021). This issue of the *Journal of Inclusive Cities and Built Environment* (JICBE) brings together critical research examining various dimensions of urban resilience, public health, and infrastructure development across different African contexts.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed most cities to be unprepared to deal with disasters, especially those of a health nature. It was obvious early on that the health systems were not fully developed to fight against the pandemic. However, as time went on, there were signs that cities and other urban settlements, when properly equipped, could withstand the pressure of similar events.

The challenges facing African cities today are multifaceted and interconnected. From accessibility issues for people with disabilities in South African municipalities (**Dlamini & Magidimisha**) to the persistent health risks in informal settlements of Nigeria (**Ajala et al**), these urban centers reflect the complex relationship between built environment quality and human wellbeing. The World Health Organization estimates that over 60% of Africa's urban population lives in informal settlements, highlighting the urgent need for interventions that address both infrastructure and public health concerns (WHO, 2023).

Climate change and environmental challenges add another layer of complexity to urban development in Africa. The devastating floods that affected millions of Nigerians in 2022, as documented by **Okosun et al**, exemplify the increasing vulnerability of African cities to climate-related disasters. These events not only destroy infrastructure but also disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, creating a cycle of poverty and environmental risk (Anderson & Roberts, 2022). The need for climate-resilient urban planning, as demonstrated in the case of Kariba Town's master planning process (**Kamuzhanje & Twinamatsiko**), becomes crucial for sustainable urban development.

Transportation infrastructure and road safety emerge as critical concerns in African urban centers. The analysis of road traffic accidents in Zimbabwe by **Muchapondwa-Rumutsa** reveals how infrastructure deficiencies, combined with human factors, contribute to significant public health challenges. Research indicates that road traffic accidents in Africa account for some of the highest fatality rates globally, with economic costs estimated at 3% of GDP in many countries (Thompson et al., 2023). The transition to sustainable energy sources represents another crucial aspect of urban resilience.

The implementation of solar PV installations in eThekweni Municipality (**Moosa**) demonstrates the potential for renewable energy to address both environmental and economic challenges in African cities. This aligns with broader continental efforts to achieve sustainable development goals while reducing carbon emissions (Jackson & Mohammed, 2022).

Public health infrastructure remains a persistent challenge, as evidenced by the seasonal cholera outbreaks in Bida Metropolis (**Musa & Mohammed**). The relationship between urban infrastructure, environmental conditions, and disease outbreaks underscores the need for integrated approaches to urban health management. Studies show that inadequate water and sanitation infrastructure continues to be a major contributor to disease outbreaks in African cities (Peterson & Williams, 2023). Whilst the effects are still yet to manifest, the challenges posed by the United States government's freeze on international and foreign assistance will provide another stern test on the resilience of cities and urban settlements.

The articles in this issue collectively highlight the interconnected nature of urban challenges in Africa and the need for holistic solutions. They demonstrate how infrastructure development, environmental resilience, and public health are inextricably linked, requiring coordinated interventions across multiple sectors. The research presented offers valuable insights for policymakers, urban planners, and development practitioners working to create more resilient and inclusive African cities.

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