

POPULATION OF AFRICAN CITIES TO TRIPLE

African city populations will more than triple over the next 40 years, warns UN-HABITAT's new report, *The State of African Cities 2010: Governance, Inequalities and Urban Land Markets*.

For the first time, in 2009, Africa's total population exceeded one billion, of which 395 million, almost 40 per cent, lived in urban areas. This urban population will grow to one billion in 2040, and to 1.23 billion in 2050, by which time 60 per cent of all Africans will be living in cities.

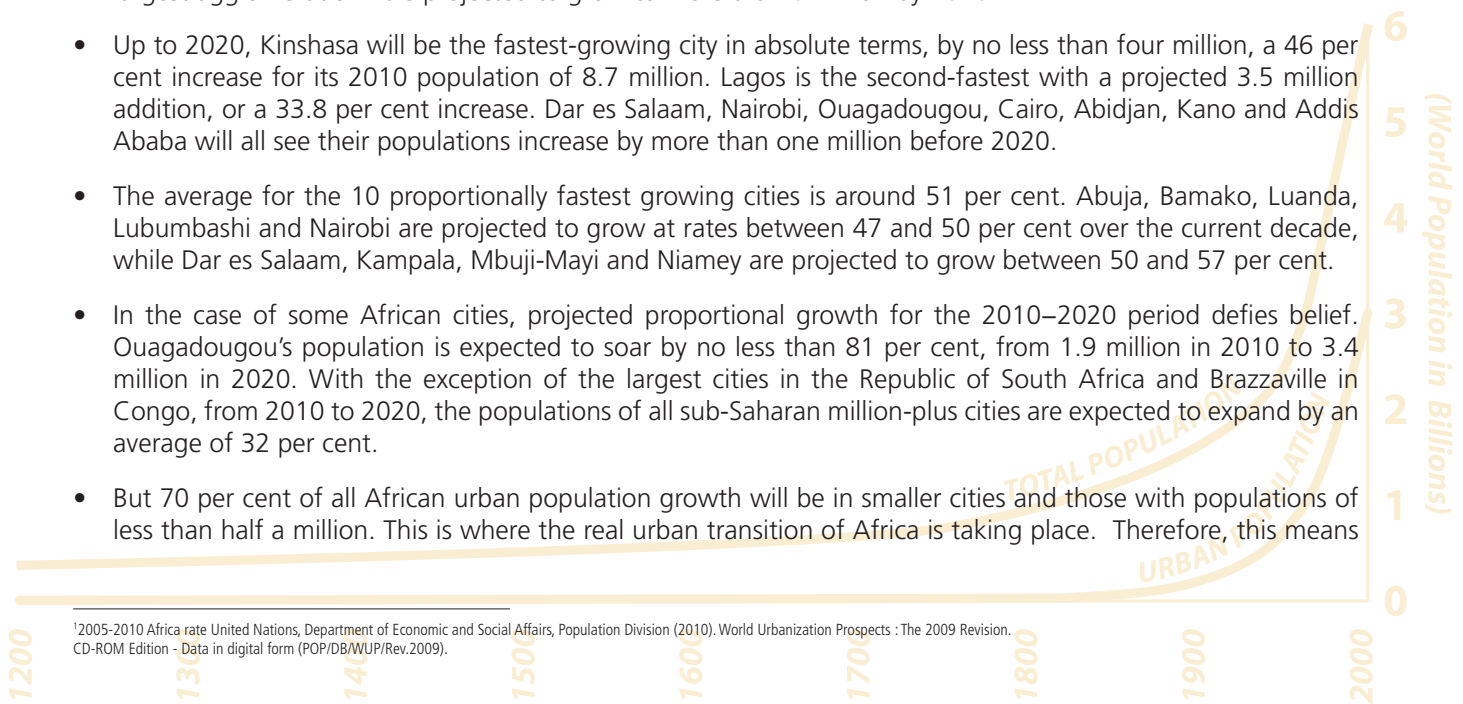
"No African government can afford to ignore the ongoing rapid urban transition taking place across the continent. Cities must become priority areas for public policies, with hugely increased investments to build adequate governance capacities, equitable services delivery, affordable housing provision and better wealth distribution," said Joan Clos, the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT.

According to the report, with an urban growth rate of 3.4¹ per cent, Africa is the fastest urbanizing continent in the world and will in 2030 cease being predominantly rural. The increase in urban populations will lead to an exponential increase in the demand for shelter and services. But as the authors point out African cities are already inundated with slums; a tripling of urban populations could spell disaster, unless urgent action is initiated today.

DIMENSIONS OF URBANISATION

The report highlights various dimensions of urbanisation in Africa making a number of observations:

- Cairo, with 11 million inhabitants is still Africa's largest urban agglomeration. But not for much longer. In 2015, Lagos will be the largest with 12.4 million inhabitants. In 2020, Kinshasa's 12.7 million will also have overtaken Cairo's then 12.5 million population. Luanda has recently surpassed Alexandria and is now Africa's fourth largest agglomeration. It is projected to grow to more than 8 million by 2040.
- Up to 2020, Kinshasa will be the fastest-growing city in absolute terms, by no less than four million, a 46 per cent increase for its 2010 population of 8.7 million. Lagos is the second-fastest with a projected 3.5 million addition, or a 33.8 per cent increase. Dar es Salaam, Nairobi, Ouagadougou, Cairo, Abidjan, Kano and Addis Ababa will all see their populations increase by more than one million before 2020.
- The average for the 10 proportionally fastest growing cities is around 51 per cent. Abuja, Bamako, Luanda, Lubumbashi and Nairobi are projected to grow at rates between 47 and 50 per cent over the current decade, while Dar es Salaam, Kampala, Mbuji-Mayi and Niamey are projected to grow between 50 and 57 per cent.
- In the case of some African cities, projected proportional growth for the 2010–2020 period defies belief. Ouagadougou's population is expected to soar by no less than 81 per cent, from 1.9 million in 2010 to 3.4 million in 2020. With the exception of the largest cities in the Republic of South Africa and Brazzaville in Congo, from 2010 to 2020, the populations of all sub-Saharan million-plus cities are expected to expand by an average of 32 per cent.
- But 70 per cent of all African urban population growth will be in smaller cities and those with populations of less than half a million. This is where the real urban transition of Africa is taking place. Therefore, this means



¹2005-2010 Africa rate United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2010). World Urbanization Prospects : The 2009 Revision. CD-ROM Edition - Data in digital form (POP/DB/WUP/Rev.2009).

that smaller cities will increasingly need public investment to cater for this growth.

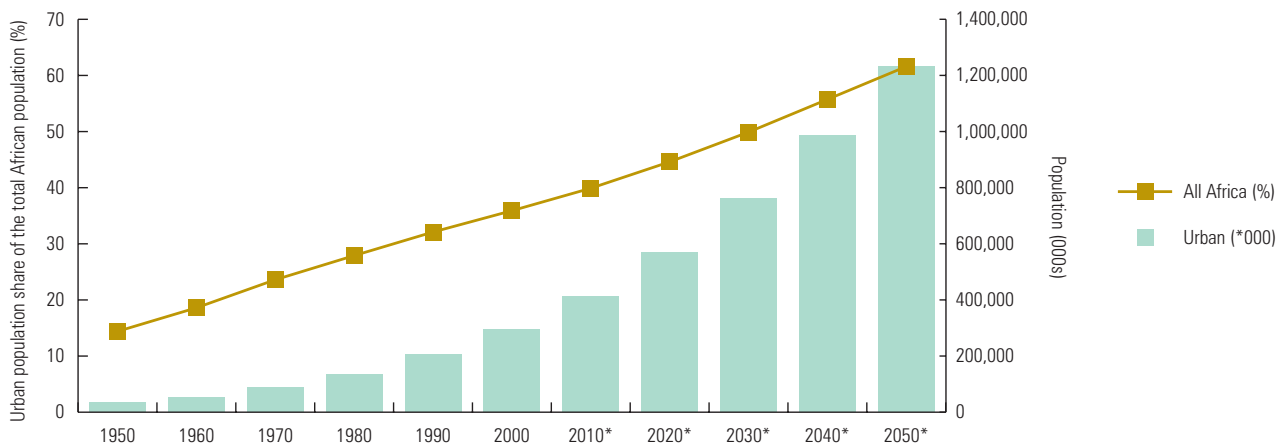
DRAWING LESSONS

Drawing lessons from urbanisation in other continents and other times, the authors argue that strong demographic growth in cities is neither good nor bad on its own. If anything, worldwide, urbanisation has been associated with improved human development, rising incomes and better living standards. However, these benefits do not come automatically. They require well-devised public policies that steer demographic growth, create healthy urban economies, and ensure equitable distribution of wealth.

Rapid demographic growth that merely results in massive urban slum proliferation, steep inequality and human misery is not good urban growth. When demographic expansion is harnessed in support of economic progress and development through job creation and higher productivity, this is 'good' urbanisation. Such progress is predicated on good governance that sees to proper housing and basic services for all.

This model is the reverse of the socio-economic conditions currently prevailing in African cities regardless of size, where demographic expansion is continuing against a background of significant and ever-growing shortfalls in housing, services and livelihood opportunities. These deficiencies can only worsen if African cities are allowed to mushroom under current *laissez faire* modalities of urban expansion. African governments must regain control over their cities' development.

AFRICAN URBAN POPULATION TREND 1950-2050



* Projections