

INTERACT-BIO DIALOGUE SUMMARY: ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS

Mainstreaming nature into urban planning and architectural design: The local government and private sector imperative



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INTERACT-Bio
Integrated action on biodiversity



1. Framing the context

An interactive dialogue between six private-sector professional architects and planners, working in Dar es Salaam was held to identify gaps in vertical and horizontal integration in an effort to enhance the implementation of biodiversity targets, specifically looking at urban design, urban architecture and their links to land-use planning and decision-making. The dialogue was facilitated by ICLEI Africa and adopted an investigative approach whereby information was gathered during discussion led by a few guiding questions. This dialogue forms part of a series to serve as a vehicle for promoting and strengthening biodiversity mainstreaming. Furthermore, these dialogues are intended to bring together national, subnational and local actors for a vertically and horizontally integrated dialogue on the importance and benefits of biodiversity conservation, as well as providing an opportunity for knowledge sharing and information exchange on the mainstreaming of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Urbanisation has become a large and permanent feature of our present and future global landscape. Urban ecosystems and their accompanying biodiversity have to be incorporated into land use planning in order for these features to live on to support human well-being in urban settings. Sustainable urban development implies

an equitable, participatory and aligned approach to planning. Therefore, it is imperative that professionals who design, plan and build cities have the mechanisms available to incorporate nature's benefits into the urban design and development as convened by local governments.

Furthermore, the focus of the dialogue has strong links to multilateral global commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. In terms of SDGs, the dialogue aligns with Goal 11 to make cities and human settlements more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable as it seeks to merge private sector imperatives with a holistic understanding of how nature can be harnessed to benefit a city and its citizens. The dialogue also aligns with Goal 15 to protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss. Lastly, in terms of Aichi Targets, the subject at hand closely aligns with Target 2, which promotes the integration of biodiversity values into national and local development and planning processes.



2. Emerging themes & lessons learned

2.1. Are there relationships that should be built around this topic?

When asked how one experiences incorporating nature's benefits into design, planning, and building, the architects and planners from the private sector called for an entirely new relationship to be built because the current planning discourse surrounding architects and planners is insufficient in addressing issues of urban nature. As a result, planners and architects are finding it increasingly difficult to influence decision-making in a city where cosmetic appearance drives the inclusion of nature into design, as opposed to harnessing or creating a design that compliments and enhances nature's benefits. This leads to the development of buildings and infrastructure that are not always fit-for-purpose in a tropical climate, as well as missing countless opportunities for better integration with the environment in Dar es Salaam. Therefore, there is a desperate need to build a relationship between architects, planners, engineers and city officials which can be used to enhance collaboration both horizontally and vertically.

2.1.1. How effective are the tools/processes that guide the integration of nature into the development of infrastructure?

The conversation delved deeper into understanding why nature's benefits are not incorporated in design, planning, and building, and it was understood that the current tools/processes that guide the integration of nature into the development of infrastructure in Dar es Salaam are in many ways limited and in some instances, non-existent. For example, urban planners exist in Tanzania, but they tend to not work in government. This creates a level of disconnect between government and the private sector. The disconnect feeds into the fragmentation which the architects and planners are experiencing, as there doesn't appear to be a common goal in mind which includes environmental imperatives.

2.2. What was the most pressing theme that was discussed?

The take home messages from the dialogue relate to the recurring and unavoidable need for more inclusive development in Dar es Salaam. This theme was further emphasized and unpacked by the following insights shared:

- Urban growth has outstripped the City's planning ability;
- Policy and implementation measures are not strict or well-enforced in the City;
- Comprehensive urban design and regional planning is severely lacking.

2.3. How can ICLEI improve the issues identified above?

This dialogue highlighted numerous opportunities. It would appear that ICLEI can assist most effectively through facilitating a closer relationship between government and the private sectors' architects and planners, as well as perhaps engaging with government directly to encourage and educate the necessity of nature-based solutions in sustainable planning and future development. INTERACT-Bio's pilot demonstration projects provide tangible opportunities for architects and planners to interact with local government in the exercise of collaborative design and planning.



3. Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework implications

Going forward, the dialogue and the points raised can be viewed through the Post-2020 lens, specifically in point 5 of ICLEI's 10 Point Framework, which promotes the creation of an enabling environment that supports the mainstreaming of the multiple social and health benefits of nature at the local and subnational levels to improve the quality of life and resilience of communities, enhance social cohesion and lead to financial benefits and savings for both individuals and governments. In addition, Point 3 promotes the creation of an enabling environment for significantly increased private sector investment and development aid in nature-based solutions at local and subnational levels, as they are closer to the mainstreaming sectors and best positioned to build and sustain functional and resilient ecosystems and urban-rural linkages. In this regard, both points highlight the necessity for the issues raised in this dialogue to be addressed, as their resolution can prove to be hugely beneficial to Dar es Salaam and the Post-2020 agenda.

INTERACT-Bio project at a glance

Full title: Integrated subnational action for biodiversity: Supporting implementation of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans through the mainstreaming of biodiversity objectives across city-regions

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