



# Urban Africa Risk Knowledge



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Research and practice to break cycles of risk accumulation and build understanding for equity and resilience in cities of sub-Saharan Africa



**Urban ARK (DFID-ESRC)  
2015-2018.**

**Project scope:**  
5 countries  
6 cities  
12 partners

- Partners: Abdou Moumouni University (Niger) African Population and Health Research Centre (Kenya) Arup (UK) International Alert (UK) International Institute for Environment and Development, King's College London (UK), Mzuzu University (Malawi), Save the Children (Niger and UK), UNHABITAT, University of Cape Town (SA), University of Ibadan (Nigeria), University College London (UK)



**\*\*Development drives risk and risk is an opportunity to development differently**



**3 core challenges** for urbanisation and risk in sub-Saharan Africa:

- 1) building data
- 2) building understanding of urbanisation and risk relationships,
- 3) building risk management capacity.



### Urban ARK Research Questions

- What is the nature, scale and distribution of risk across the whole spectrum of hazards in urban centres, and what are their inter-linkages?
- What are the underlying factors driving risk accumulation in the context of urban growth and change, poverty and climate change?
- What institutional arrangements in local governance and in urban planning are capable of reducing risk and building resilience in this context?

- **Diverse methods:** compare the appropriateness of contrasting vulnerability and loss assessment and other methodologies for a range of urban contexts



## Sub-Saharan Urbanisation and Urbanism: implications for risk accumulation and reduction



**Purpose:** to describe *recent trends in Sub-Saharan African urban centres* and examine their possible implications for *risk accumulation and risk reduction*.

**Relevance:** “African cities” manifest general urban processes... but at the same time require specific treatment (informality, dispersion, etc.)



## Sub-Saharan Urbanisation and Urbanism: implications for risk accumulation and reduction



- African urban experiences
- Spatial dynamics of urban expansion in SSAfrica
- Nature of poverty in African cities
- Persistent urban informality
- Urban forms
- Urban economies in SSAfrica
- **Urban governance in Africa**
- Emerging themes



*- asking the question: “how does this shape risk?”*

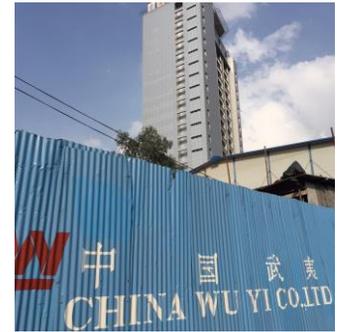
*integrating gender, conflict, extensive risk,*

*- Substantial literature on African urbanism – but little that links this explicitly to risk*





- Local government: Widespread capacity and resource constraints
- Informality and blurred boundaries between formal/informal
- Fragmentation
- Civil society and emergence of new actors in the city
- Partnerships and networking
- Governing through shadow systems and spaces – social networks and social learning



- Risk production in urban centres is highly complex
- Need for policy makers at multiple scales to engage with both the proximate and ultimate drivers of risk
- Focus on the opportunities and potential for resilience building in emerging urban centre
- Large part of the urban disaster risk challenge rests in governance



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