

Durban

Putting climate change at the center of urban planning



Population
3.7m

Durban's commitment to sustainability is paying off: this year the city was CDP's top-disclosing city in Africa and has won praise for innovative projects that combine environmental action with a broader development agenda. In an interview with CDP, three members of the city's climate change team, Musa Mbhele, Linda Somazembe and Nongcebo Hlongwa, discuss the progress Durban has made – and how external reporting helps drive its aim of becoming Africa's most liveable city.

Durban is a city with bold ambitions. By 2030, it aims to be Africa's most liveable city. Getting there will involve considering the environment, the economy and human wellbeing together.

"It will be a space where people will have access to affordable green transport," he says, **"with solar panels on the rooftops, more urban gardens, protection of green spaces, which will act as flood defence,"** says Musa Mbhele, the Head of Development Planning, Environment and Management.

City officials are dealing with a range of competing priorities, Mbhele claims, **"the delivery of basic services to communities, such as running water, electricity and proper healthcare are pressing issues for local government".**

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Emission targets

34%

reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2020, from 2010 baseline. In line with South Africa's national targets.

But he stresses that sustainability is integral to the broader development plan.

The message is getting through. After recent flooding in the South Durban Basin, an industrial area originally constructed on former wetlands, the city government embarked on a rehabilitation project that will use natural infrastructure to boost the area's resilience to future extreme weather. It's good for the businesses operating there too, as many were considering relocating due to the frequent flooding.

"It's going to be redesigned with climate change adaption and mitigation principles built into the urban design," Mbhele says. **"We will be able to share with the world how**

negatively transformed urban centres can be rebuilt with climate change in mind."

The project is part of Durban's strategy to integrate water management and sustainable drainage into its urban planning. But alongside flooding risk, Durban must tackle the growing threat of droughts.

With Cape Town and Durban experiencing periods of exceptionally low rainfall, the issue of drought is at the forefront of many South Africans' minds. **"We have embarked on a number of transformative programs,"** says Mbhele, **"namely the Umgeni Ecological Infrastructure Partnership, which is upgrading water infrastructure and ensuring a heightened protection of our ecological infrastructure, namely wetlands, so that we deal with the problem of drought".**

Sustainability has multiple benefits, including eco-social wellbeing. And nowhere more so than in the Buffelsdraai Community Reforestation Project. On the fringes of a landfill site, a verdant native forest now grows: almost 600,000 trees of over 51 species planted since 2010 occupy an area of 787 hectares. Not only has it improved the quality of life for the community living nearby, which includes some of Durban's poorest citizens, it has boosted the local economy, bolstered community pride and encouraged an increased respect for the environment.

"We have flipped the ideology of 'the environment for the environment's sake' to focusing on the environment for the community's sake," explains Nongcebo Hlongwa, Climate Protection Scientist. The project created 43 permanent jobs and numerous part-time and temporary jobs, she says, while the seedlings are sourced from 540 local 'treepreneurs': **"They're basically feeding the reforestation system so we don't buy trees from outside of the city."**

Celebrating climate actions

Strong climate change governance is at the centre of this progress. When it comes to implementing

Best practice examples

- Combining climate action with the sustainable development agenda
- Disseminating knowledge to regional partners
- Designing climate-smart infrastructure
- Learning from other cities through international networks
- Involving elected officials and political leaders at the highest level of decision making

the Durban Climate Change Strategy, the city's elected officials are involved at the highest level of decision making. The city brings together administrative and political leaders to discuss how they will move forward on climate action.

With Durban's mayor serving as the C40 African Regional Vice-Chair, the climate team is capitalising on this momentum to drive its agenda of climate change, sustainability and climate resilience in the city.

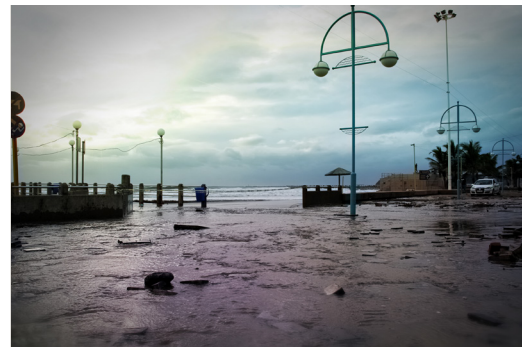
Teams from across city departments regularly meet to discuss how they will meet Durban's climate ambitions. **"We are on the right path in terms of popularising climate change work and we feel we are going to have immediate impact on that front,"** says Mbhele.

Reporting environmental performance is key here, says Linda Somazembe, Durban's Climate Change Monitoring and Reporting Advisor. **"It gives us zeal to know that our climate actions within the municipality are making a difference and that they're being noticed."**

That's true at an international level, too, she notes. **"We have the opportunity to be ranked among other international cities."** CDP's global reporting platform gives the city a wider platform to showcase its achievements – and to seek funding opportunities for future projects.

Sharing expertise

Durban is using its expertise in environmental reporting and planning to take a leadership position regionally. Mbhele tells us that city officials were inspired by a city in the US to share lessons with other municipalities. **"Because environmental**



problems, particularly climate change, have an impact beyond political and national boundaries, we felt that we needed to be able to extend our knowledge and lessons learnt – and to share them broadly."

As the secretariat of the Durban Adaptation Charter, the city has hosted a series of knowledge exchanges and master classes with municipalities in neighbouring regions and countries, including the cities of Pemba and Quelimane in Mozambique. Both these cities had issues relating to sea level rise and flooding. Through this process, both cities have been able to develop infrastructure and management strategies and are now implementing this knowledge sharing approach with their neighbours.

Durban is on track to meet its vision for 2030, says Mbhele. **"And we are already that kind of city in many respects. We are already making international headlines. It's because of the efforts we have made to realise this vision."**

Key data reported to CDP in 2017

Climate hazards:

5 major climate risks including:



Flash floods



Drought



Water use reduction incentives



Heat mapping



Rain storms



Extreme hot days



Rain storm risk monitoring



Sea level rise modelling

Adaption actions:

5 climate-change related projects in development:

Emissions reduction actions:

3 emissions reduction opportunities identified:



Solar PV installations on municipal buildings



Energy efficiency retrofits



Replacement of streetlights with LEDs



CDP is a global environmental non-profit that helps investors, companies, cities, states and regions assess their environmental impact and take urgent action to build a truly sustainable economy. CDP works with over 500 cities on measuring and disclosing environmental data each year to manage emissions, build resilience, protect themselves from climate impacts and create better places for people to live and work. These cities are disclosing over 8,000 urban sustainability actions, demonstrating their commitment to building a sustainable economy and tackling climate change.

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