

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Fact Sheet

BACKGROUND

Urban development plays a crucial role in shaping the growth and sustainability of a nation, and for Fiji, a small nation located in the Pacific, urban development holds particular significance. Approximately 58% of population resides in urban areas. Urban development encompasses social, physical, cultural and economic dimensions. It includes the provision and accessibility to sustainable public infrastructure and amenities. Fiji's approach to urban development is inclusive, focusing on spurring economic activity, enhancing livability, harmonizing urbanization with environmental sustainability, and increasing resilience to the impact of climate change and natural disasters given Fiji's unique ecosystems.

CURRENT STATUS

Over last two decades, urban population has grown while the rural population has correspondingly contracted. A total of 884,887 persons were enumerated for the 2017 Population and Housing Census of which 56.8 percent is urban population. As Fiji's population and economy continues to grow, some municipalities are urbanizing more quickly than others, but all are confronting challenges related to growth.

There are 13 municipalities which are governed through the use of municipal councils, headed by Special Administrators appointed by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972. All municipal councils in Fiji have approved town planning schemes, as required under the Town Planning Act, 1946. The Government is committed to addressing urbanization concerns through integrated planning, strengthening urban governance, balancing rural and urban developments by having a systematic approach. One of the key commitments of the government is to improve infrastructure in urban areas.

CHALLENGES

1. *Rapid population growth:* constant migration from rural areas, leading to overcrowding and strain on resources and infrastructure. Limited housing options, inadequate transportation, and

pressure on essential services like water and sanitation systems are common issues

2. *Land development and administration:* 20% of the urban population lives in informal settlements in high-risk peri-urban areas which mostly lack basic services and infrastructure. Much of the previous informal settlements occurred following the release of land by landowning units to developers or to settlers directly.
3. *Environment and climate change:* environmental degradation and climate change vulnerability accompanied by increased pollution and waste generation is putting strain on the environment. In addition, Fiji's high vulnerability to climate change, rising sea level and extreme weather events is posing challenges for urban development.
4. *Aging infrastructure:* aging infrastructure in urban centres such as transportation, buildings and utilities is unable to meet the growing demand from increasing population and economic activities.
5. *Inadequate number of Urban Planners and weak urban governance and management:* Fiji has a limited number of urban planning professionals and this is constraining effective urban and city planning and development.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. *Economic Growth:* Urban areas can serve as hubs for economic activities, attracting investments, creating job opportunities, and contributing to overall economic growth.
2. *Sustainable Development:* There is an opportunity to promote sustainable urban development practices, including green infrastructure, renewable energy, and efficient transportation systems, to mitigate environmental impacts and enhance resilience.
3. *Technology and Innovation:* Embracing technology and innovation can improve urban services, enhance efficiency, and create smart cities that offer improved quality of life for residents.

FUTURE POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

➤ **Enhance service delivery framework:**

- ✓ Review and put in place appropriate legislative and policy frameworks for the creation and management of townships and growth centres.
- ✓ Streamline Department of Town and Country Planning (DTCP) processes.
- ✓ Increase private sector participation and partnership in facilitating development and investment in the peri-urban and urban areas to address housing, transportation, and provision of essential utilities and services.

➤ **Create an environment that fosters effective and efficient resource management:**

- ✓ Continue the identification and extension of town boundaries.
- ✓ Promote and incentivize development in peri-urban areas.
- ✓ Develop and legislate land use planning for decentralizing outside main city centres
- ✓ Review institutional arrangements for land owners, businesses and investors.

➤ **Implement vulnerability assessments, and climate change and natural hazards impact projections in infrastructure and urban planning:**

- ✓ Undertake climate change modelling on all urban centres and develop hazard maps for all urban centres.
- ✓ Incorporate climate change adaptation and disaster risk management into town planning schemes.
- ✓ Incorporate features to strengthen resilience to disasters in infrastructure designs
- ✓ Strengthen coastal boundaries of urban centres.
- ✓ Develop disaster risk reduction and disaster management response plans for all urban centres. These plans should address issues such as early warning systems, inter-agency coordination and the disaster response capacity of key agencies.

- ✓ Build partnerships between the community, private sector and municipal councils to collectively address climate change and disaster risk management challenges in urban centres.

- ✓ Improve knowledge and understanding at all levels of municipal governance of the hazard maps relevant to their respective jurisdictions.

- ✓ Establish a National Platform for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management where stakeholders can interact and better coordinate resources.

➤ **Enhance Strengthen urban management and administration of town planning at municipal level:**

- ✓ Review status of Urban Policy Action Plan to determine achievements and areas for future work.to undertake institutional changes to improve urban management

- ✓ Update all town-planning schemes to ensure they reflect the current state on the ground. This will provide a better basis to develop long-term spatial plans.

- ✓ Develop spatial plans with associated 20-year miniature models for all urban centres with the participation of all stakeholders within the municipality.

- ✓ Develop a program to strengthen the capacity of all municipal councils to effectively administer town-planning responsibilities including stronger enforcement and adherence to the town planning schemes and spatial plans that will be developed.

- ✓ Update town-planning schemes of small towns. Take the opportunity to adopt technology and urban management practices used successfully in towns abroad but adapted to suit the local context.

- ✓ Develop functional linkages between small towns and surrounding rural areas which will be part of the long-term development plan for the Division