

Climate action

Under a new scheme, African cities including Addis Ababa, Kinshasa and Fez will be helped to adapt to climate change. **Jack Dutton** reports on how new funding will help Africa's cities tool up to face the challenge

EIB and World Bank to help African cities unlock green funding

Cities are the main sources of greenhouse gas emissions. Although they occupy only 2% of the world's land area, they account for over 70% of emissions, according to the World Bank. Africa is becoming more urbanised, with younger populations increasingly moving from rural areas to cities to find work. As cities grow, new settlements are often built on land that is particularly vulnerable to climate risks, increasing the need for urban areas to be better adapted to climate change.

In September 2020, the World Bank and the European Investment Bank (EIB) launched the City Climate Finance Gap Fund, which aims to support the green and climate-resilient development of cities in low- and middle-income countries.

Through donor support, technical assistance, and targeted finance of at least €100m (\$122m), the fund plans to unlock an estimated €4bn to help cities transform climate ambitions into finance-ready projects. Germany, through its development arm GIZ, intends to invest around €40m and Luxembourg up to €10m.

Giulia Macagno, head of the City Climate Finance Gap Fund at the EIB, says that Germany's environment ministry and the Global Covenant of Mayors – which represents the heads of more than 10,700 cities – saw a funding gap at the beginning of climate resilient projects for low- and middle-income countries.

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Opposite: Inhabitants of Kinshasa brave the floodwaters after the River Congo burst its banks in January 2020. The city is exposed to frequent flooding.

"Many project preparation facilities support urban climate projects when they are in the advanced stages. The Gap Fund helps cities much earlier in the process. To overcome cities' inexperience and lack of knowledge, the Gap Fund provides technical assistance that moves project ideas to more advanced planning stages and thus facilitates their implementation," Macagno tells *African Business*.

Cities and local authorities are able to apply for Gap Fund support by submitting an expression of interest, and those with successful applications will receive technical assistance from the EIB or the World Bank. The first round of technical assistance grants for nine cities were approved in early April, amounting to \$1.8m in total. The selected African cities include Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; and Fez, Morocco. The second list of city projects will likely be announced in June, Macagno says.

Fez's drought challenge

All of the three African pilot cities are particularly vulnerable to climate change. Over the last 50 years, droughts have intensified in Morocco's arid climate, which houses thousands of square miles of the Sahara Desert. Since the beginning of the 1980s, recurrent droughts have impacted the hinterland of the northeast city of Fez. The primary sector, including agriculture, employs 40% of the North African country's workforce and contributes 15% of the country's GDP, making Morocco particularly vulnerable to dry spells, according to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. When there's a dearth of water in dams, farmers turn to overused aquifers near the Atlantic Ocean to irrigate their crops.

Augustin Maria, senior urban specialist at the World Bank, says his team will work with both the ministry of environment and municipality of Fez to make the city more climate resilient.

Morocco has 12 regions and the technical assistance would support the preparation of the territorial climate action plan for the region of Fez-Meknes, which includes the major urban areas of Fez, Meknes, and Taza.

The work will support Fez in developing the first city level climate action plan prepared by a Moroccan city. Fez's action plan will include a city-level greenhouse gas emissions inventory, and the identification and prioritisation of city-level actions for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

"As an example, potential low carbon investments typically include investments in urban transit, energy efficiency of public buildings, incentives for improving the energy efficiency of private buildings, or waste management," says Maria.

Morocco already has several climate resilience projects in the pipeline. In February, the Moroccan minister of agriculture visited the coastal city of Agadir to view its new large desalination plant in development. It will be able to desalinate seawater for irrigation and municipal uses, relieving pressure on aquifers further inland.

Kinshasa's floods

Kinshasa faces an entirely separate list of challenges. The capital city lies on the banks of the Congo River,

