

Concept Note:

# Dialogue on Governing for Urban Inclusion

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## Background

Sustainable development goal 11 calls for cities and human settlements to be, 'inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.' The Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees recognise that good migration governance relies on a 'whole-of-government' approach calling for a multi-ministerial, multi-scale approach to human mobility. As the number one destination for African migrants, South Africa has the opportunity to pioneer progressive forms of inter-government collaboration that build inclusive communities in line with international protocols and domestic, constitutional commitments.

Promoting urban inclusion means recognising the intersection of formal governance systems and demographic dynamics. As elsewhere in the developing world, South African cities are quickly transforming, often in ways that outpace formal planning. International and domestic mobility are among core drivers of these changing socio-spatial morphologies. Indeed, South African cities are hosts to increasingly heterogeneous populations. Intersections of class, gender, sexuality and religion with ethnicity, language, nationality and legal status produce complex social fields. Ongoing mobility into, out of and through cities generates multiple forms of translocal trade, families, and orientations both within and beyond South Africa's borders.

While primary cities may receive the majority of migrants, mobility's effects are often more pronounced in secondary cities or on the urban periphery. Governed well, diversity and translocality can be an invaluable asset, building individual and family resilience; promoting investment and exchange; and promoting inclusive economic growth. It can also be a source of economic marginalisation and conflict.

This dialogue aims to consider how emerging forms of mobility and belonging challenge current meanings and approaches to promoting social cohesion, urban participation, and socio-economic investment. Due to a mixture of institutional incentives, incapacities, and demographic invisibility, urban mobility dynamics are outpacing formal governance regimes. The consequences include lost opportunities for economic growth, ineffective planning and municipal investment, and social fragmentation. Ineffective planning results in fewer children in schools, poor access to health care, and housing ill-suited to the urban population.

Rather than cohesive, progressively governed sites, many urban areas are effectively overseen by vigilantes, parallel political systems, and varied forms of anti-outsider exclusion. These have direct implications for the rights of domestic migrants, immigrants, and refugees along with citizens local leaders deem undesirable for social, economic or political reasons. These may include members of minority racial or ethnic groups, people with non-hetero-normative sexual identities, or members of particular political factions or parties. Such

informal mechanisms reinforce irregular and undemocratic governance regimes that threaten the rule of law and the human rights of all city residents particularly the poor and the marginalised.

**The African Centre for Migration & Society (ACMS)**, in collaboration with the country's major cities (Johannesburg in Gauteng, Cape Town in Western Cape, and eThekweni in KwaZulu Natal) is organising a series of dialogues to reflect on appropriate approaches to governing diversity and building inclusive cities in South Africa. This dialogue builds on a recognition that:

- The lack of proactive engagement limits cities potential to fulfil their developmental mandate and to offer protection, socio-economic prosperity and security equally to all residents, and;
- Municipalities are increasingly called to play a more significant role in the governance of human mobility and diversity

The dialogues will specifically focus on 'local governance'. This means looking beyond state institutions to include the economic and informal mechanisms that regulate people, processes and places. Local governance at the municipal and community levels is particularly important as migration is a deeply spatialized process. While national spatial planning and immigration policy remain important, municipalities are the 'front line'. People move from one specific place to another, either within a municipality or into another municipality within or across countries. As such, local governments have significant roles to play to progressively manage migration and diversity.

## **Dialogue Objectives**

The dialogues aim to bring together relevant stakeholders within government, civil society, academia and community-based organisations to reconsider modes of interventions, theories of change, and stakeholder engagement with regard to addressing current forms of identity-based exclusion and violence in South African cities. This will begin by a potentially uncomfortable debate over the meaning and desirability of inclusion in diverse and mobile cities. It will continue by identifying the institutional incentives and opportunities for building more cohesive, pro- poor municipalities. We hope these engagements will result in local level communities of practice that will continue working to devise locally appropriate approaches to governing diversity and building inclusive cities. These approaches should outline concrete plans municipalities, together with other relevant stakeholders, can implement in order to maximize the benefits of diversity while minimising its potential challenges and to build inclusive and cohesive communities where groups and individuals are able to live peacefully together differently.

## **Key dialogue themes**

- Urban inclusion: meaning and modalities
- Obstacles and opportunities for urban inclusion
- Governing for inclusion: incentives, requirements, strategies, actors

## Expected outputs

1. A multi-stakeholder plan of action targeting local government's cognitive shift towards inclusive governance and service delivery.
2. Intervention models to promote more proactive and more effective response from government, civil society and the private sector.
3. Increased awareness and understanding of casual factors and negative implications of outsider exclusion to encourage the adoption of relevant policy and practical measures.
4. Plan of action to improve coordination and interventions by different stakeholders in the sector.

## Dialogue format

In each city, a dialogue will consist of an online event during which a mix of facilitated sessions, plenaries and breakout parallel sessions will be organised. In breakout parallel sessions, participants will work in small groups to reflect on key areas and formulate strategies and action plans.