

## **“Building Urban Climate Resilience in South-Eastern Africa”**

### **COVID-19 CONTINGENCY PLAN STATEMENT**

The pandemic outbreak the whole world is currently facing is putting a strain on life and work as we know it from many angles. From single households up to the biggest organisations and companies in the world, we are witnessing the emergence of new challenges that have to be tackled on a daily basis.

Therefore, in this unprecedented and turbulent situation, many adjustments must be put in place to ensure continuity of activities, while paying special attention to the most vulnerable situations.

The main goal of this project is to contribute to relieving the burden of the adverse effects of climate change on our countries and cities. It is of the utmost importance then to add a COVID-19-sensitive lens to our planning and prepare for related contingencies. We must consider possible new challenges that might emerge during the implementation of the project.

Although we cannot predict now what will happen in the foreseeable future, the aim is to comply with the timing dictated by the workplan as much as possible. Nevertheless, a case by case approach is necessary: health and safety need to always be the priority.

Given the peculiar constraints imposed by the COVID-19 emergency, an adaptive management approach is imperative. The project will inevitably go through some reprogramming to make sure that all operations will be undertaken in the safest possible manner, and always complying with the Adaptation Fund procedures and updating the AF Board Secretariat of any notable changes.

The activities planned under this project in the next four years are numerous and diverse, but whilst some of them might be postponed, others can be anticipated. Additionally, as some of them involve travels and gathering of people, alternative ways to carry them out will need to be found. In cases when gatherings can be held, necessary physical distancing measures must be observed, and hygiene protocols ensured.

It must be noted that, inherently, many of the activities of the project, for example those related to WASH already address health challenges in the cities and will be easily adaptable to the COVID-19 context.

The project team already started planning this way. For instance, while the project launch event and inception workshop was supposed to be held in-person in Nairobi, a lot of effort was put into organising it remotely, ensuring the safety of all participants, and avoiding at the same time further delays, which would ultimately affect the project beneficiaries.

That same approach will guide every step of the project, and the highest level of coordination and communication between all concerned partners at the city-, country-, and regional-level, will be ensured. Innovation, creativity and resourcefulness will be imperative for achieving project success.

If the situation will require so, specific COVID-19 related risk assessments will be conducted prior to the beginning of each activity, and in general, a regular monitoring of the situation related to the progression of the epidemic in the countries and in the cities will be done.

Despite the outstanding expertise in disaster risk reduction and adaptation of all the partners involved in the project, from the point of view of how to manage this extraordinary situation, everyone has to “learn by doing”, having as a guiding principle the best interest of our beneficiaries at heart.

After all, this is just one more step on the often-bumpy path towards becoming more resilient.

From another side, COVID -19 poses to us a new challenge on how resilient cities might be able to anticipate and respond to climate change events (risks and disasters) in a context such as this coronavirus pandemic.

COVID-19-induced mobility restrictions may indeed hamper safe and rapid evacuations while physical distancing regulations may preclude accommodating large numbers of people to temporary shelters. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic poses new challenges that might lead local institution to revise existing climate change related early warning system and contingency plans. Furthermore, COVID-19 preventive measures represent a barrier to the implementation of key preparedness climate risk actions, such as community simulation exercises, risks communication and awareness.

The Project - therefore – represents an opportunity to discuss how local institutions might be better prepared to effectively manage an integrated response to the dual challenges of climate change related events and a situation as the coronavirus crisis. Managing such complex risks is probably the new challenge and it requires a whole- of Government effort, from regional to national and local.