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Public statement

In October 2020 floods triggered by heavy rain killed 12 people in Dar es Salaam. Dozens of roads were blocked, disrupting the entire city network. Citizens lost their house, and some even their hard earned mattresses, clothes and furniture.

Many African metropolitan cities are under extreme pressure due to urban growth. Infrastructure and environmental systems are overloaded which is affecting people's safety and reducing their quality of life. Finding solutions to challenges associated with urbanization and climate change can be extremely difficult in the dynamic environment of fast growing cities. It is tempting to address these issues with a narrow scope and technical solutions because that already seems difficult enough.

However, such interventions often fail on the long term and sometimes even backfire, making cities more vulnerable. This is why, 'one size fits all solutions' don't work here. To ensure resilience and sustainability, an integral plan that tackles different angles of the problem is needed.

An integral plan fosters innovation because it requires solving multiple dilemmas with different sectors and stakeholders. The starting point is a thorough analysis, which requires time and energy at the start, but the pay-off is a plan that actually works and is supported.

This is what we are doing Dar es Salaam. The Msimbazi Basin Development Project solves the problem of flooding to settlements and critical infrastructure and it also creates an enabling environment for resilient urban development and ecosystem restoration. A green and safe city park will provide sports and play facilities and room for nature that will uplift the unhealthy hazards of fast urban growth. The plan is based on an intensive and inclusive participatory Charrette process.

So, to truly build urban resilience and foster local innovation: researchers, decision makers, key experts and other stakeholders should join hands to work on integral solutions.

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