This poster provides insights into the role of informality in urban resilience and equity. It is aimed at the international community of urban development practitioners, resilience planners, and policy-makers. These insights were compiled by a working group of the Southern Africa Resilience Academy (SARA), with the objective of making visible and reframing the complex roles informality plays in urban resilience. In challenging preconceived notions of informality, we hope to inform international and national efforts to identify more equitable, resilient, and sustainable pathways for urban development with particular attention to the challenges faced in the Global South.

**Day to day urban life entails multitude of transactions across informal and formal places and activities**

Informality is inextricable from our every-day urban lives: We purchase a mango from a street hawker, we catch a ride in an unregistered taxi, we ask a favor of a cousin in a business office to facilitate a permit to build our home. Legal, illegal or somewhere inbetween, informal transactions are part and parcel of urban fabric. We often think of informal parts of the city as lacking in basic services and struggling to catch up with the “formal” city, but the informal is just as much part of what makes the daily operations of a city work. In many ways it is the city: it often constitutes the majority of urban populations, and contributes significantly to urban economic activity!

Informality is both a challenge and an opportunity for urban resilience and equity. It will succeed only by confronting and addressing these injustices, through negotiation, deliberation, and inclusion. Demographic growth, climate change and other realities imply real limits to the capacities of all actors in complex urban systems, demanding new partnerships and alliances.

**Cities depend on informality to function and thrive!**

Informality is often considered a challenge for cities to solve, and informal activities and informal settlements can pose problems for sanitation, safety, services, and human wellbeing. The challenges do exist, and are formidable. But informal activities also fill urban gaps and meet basic needs: Waste pickers are moving solid waste off the streets and into recycled products; and food hawkers and urban gardens are addressing food and nutrition security. Informal activities can enable dialogue between actors in complex urban systems, demanding new partnerships and alliances.

**Confronting inequity and injustice is critical if informality is to be leveraged for urban resilience**

In democratic contexts, formal systems are set up to guarantee equal and fair treatment of citizens. When they fail and unjustly exclude people from access to formal services and opportunities, informal activities, institutions and places often arise to address unmet needs. However, both informal and formal activities unjustly externalize risks, resulting in unfair allocations of burdens and benefits in both. Urban resilience planning must be informed by equity.

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