

### Background information

The Government of Uganda has recognized the need to capture the positive impacts of urbanization, and seeks to devise a strategy to enhance competitiveness of urban sector in order to harness its potential as a driver of economic growth. The Government of Uganda in conjunction with its development partners Cities Alliance, UNDP, the World Bank and the UN Habitat are spearheading the formation of the Municipal Development Forums in selected Municipalities following the launch of the Uganda National Urban Forum on 6th. May 2010.

### What are MDFs (Municipal Development Forums)

MDFs are platforms established at the Municipal level for all stakeholders in the urban sector like the urban poor, local government, service providers, private sector and other stakeholders to meet regularly to exchange views, debate priorities and agree on common actions on matters pertaining to the urban sector.

MDFs are intended to bring together individuals and representatives of governmental and non-governmental institutions, organizations of the urban poor, Professional institutions, Cultural Institutions, Religious institutions as well as voluntary organizations to discuss matters pertaining to urban development at the municipal level and shall have Local Urban Development Forums in each Division.

The MDFs have a major role in enhancing broad-based consultations on matters pertaining to the urban sector that will offer all the stakeholders an opportunity to contribute to the planning process in the Municipal Councils, enhance sharing of experiences, and facilitating access to information with an aim of improving the performance of the urban sector in order to ensure sustainable urban development.

### The Theme of MDFs

“Sustainable urbanization: A collective responsibility”

### The Vision of MDFs

Sustainable Urban Development through dialogue and participation.

### The Mission of MDFs

To empower urban stakeholders to participate in influencing policy, legal and regulatory frameworks in order to ensure effective management of urban growth and sustainable urban development.

### What do the MDFs seek to provide to the urban communities

MDFs seek to provide a platform for dialogue at a Municipality level for all the stakeholders with an aim of promoting collective participation in devising strategies to tackle challenges facing the urban areas in order to lead to sustainable urban development.

The MDFs provide an opportunity to the urban poor to have a voice and make their input into policies that guide urban development and management in order to enhance service delivery. The urban poor are a reality in the urban areas; the MDFs therefore recognize the existence of the urban poor and provides a forum for them to know their rights, responsibilities and obligations.

### Principles of the MDFs

- Collective Responsibility of all stakeholders in ensuring sustainable urban development;
- Integrated planning framework for sustainable urban development;
- Effective coordination amongst all urban stakeholders enhances complementarity of roles;
- Local cooperation arrangements and networking enhances local capacities and capabilities;
- Bottom-up broad-based stakeholder participatory consultations ensures stakeholder empowerment and ownership;
- Resource mobilization for sustainable and viable urban development.

### Objectives of MDFs

- To provide space for dialogue amongst all stakeholders of the urban domain to influence policy and legal framework pertaining to planning and management of urban growth.
- To increase awareness of stakeholders about collective action to influence the urban development agenda at the Municipality level.
- To promote collaborative applied urban research to find sustainable practical solutions to critical urban challenges.
- To improve coordination and networking arrangements among stakeholders in the urban domain for purposes of exchanging information, knowledge and experiences as well as mobilizing resources for implementation of urban development programmes.
- To promote pro-active integrated participatory planning, development and management of the urban environments amongst urban actors in urban areas.
- To organize regular conferences, Seminars, fora and training events for purposes of influencing legal and policy reforms for effective urban development and management.

### Functions of MDFs

- Monitoring the implementation of resolutions from the Local Municipal Development Forums pertaining to policy and legal reforms;
- Undertaking lobby and advocacy campaigns to facilitate prioritizing of urban development issues on the regional, national and local development agendas;
- Compiling information on sustainable urban development initiatives and disseminate it to the stakeholders;
- Playing a coordinating role in prioritizing identified local urban development initiatives and facilitating sourcing of funding and technical support at all levels;
- Enhancing broad-based consultations to generate consensus on challenges of urban growth;
- Planning and organizing future annual and quarterly events at the Municipal Council level;
- Facilitating networking and applied research initiatives on planning and management of urban development issues;
- Maintaining a website for purposes of disseminating information and best practices and transferring of knowledge;
- Preparing publicity materials to update members about developments related to the urban sector in the Municipal councils;
- Disseminating and giving value added information related to urban development issues pertinent to the Municipal Councils including information on new fields of research, donor identification and professional exchange and training programmes;
- Recommending interventions aimed at addressing Urban Development issues in Uganda;

### Institutional Framework (How the MDFs operate)

The Forum is convened and supported by the Urban Local Government, with a broad membership and participation of all the different stakeholders in the Municipality. The Chairing of the Forums is typically rotation amongst the different stakeholders constituting the Forum Management body.

The MDFs are governed by Charter which may vary from Municipality to Municipality; however they adhere to similar principles. The organizational structure of the MDFs includes the Council, the Executive Committee, the Thematic Working Groups and the Secretariat.



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**Urban Concerns to be addressed by MDFs includes the following:**

- Meeting the Population pressure
- Building Orderly towns
- Improving urban services
- Accessing Urban land
- Keeping towns clean campaign
- Ensuring healthy urban environments
- Providing decent and affordable urban housing
- Ensuring a vibrant and competitive Urban economy
- Reducing urban poverty and unemployment
- Social Equity- homelessness and street children
- Urban safety and security
- Urban disaster planning, preparedness and management.
- Preserving the Urban Heritage
- Enhancing urban governance
- Strengthening the monitoring and supervision
- Beautifying the urban landscape and
- Putting in place an efficient urban transport system.

**Coverage and Scope**

MDFs currently are established at the Municipal levels. In Uganda they have been introduced in five (5) Municipalities namely; Jinja, Mbarara, Mbale, Kabale and Arua.

**Membership to the MDFs/ who should be a part of the MDFs**

Membership of the MDFs is open and consists of the public sector, private sector, Voluntary organizations including NGOs, development partners, CBOs with a demonstrable interest in the urban sector. In the different five Municipalities the members shall be registered with the MDFs after pledging in writing to abide by the respective municipal Charters and to act in good faith and to the best of their ability in the application of the policies and procedures established by the Forum Charter or by the Council. All the Municipal urbanites at all levels/sectors are the beneficiaries and target group of the municipal development forums.

**Future prospects for MDFs**

The government of Uganda intends to extend this programme to the rest of the other Municipalities and Town Councils to enable increased community participation in devising strategies to the urbanization challenges in order to ensure sustainable urban development at the local level.

**Duration of the MDFs**

MDFs are permanent fora for networking, sharing and disseminating information, promoting cooperation amongst various actors in the urban sector to ensure advancement and sustainability of orderly urban development and advocating for prioritization of urban sector issues in the overall national development agenda and promoting integrated planning and management of urban growth.

MDFs are established to stay because urbanization is a process that cannot be stopped but only needs to be planned for and managed in a sustainable way.

***Sustainable Urbanization is a collective responsibility: Play your part and together we shall achieve better and healthy towns.***



THE MUNICIPAL FORUMS  
**IN UGANDA**