Institute for
Global Prosperity

Developing the Maisha Bora Index

Contents

About the Institute for Global Prosperity

The institute for Global Prosperity at UCL (IGP) is redesigning prosperity for the 21st century, changing the way we conceive and run our economies, and reworking our relationship with the planet. IGP's vision is to build a prosperous, sustainable global future, underpinned by the principles of fairness and justice, and allied to a realistic, long-term vision of humanity's place in the world.

The IGP undertakes pioneering research that seeks to dramatically improve the quality of life for current and future generations. Its strength lies in the way it allies intellectual creativity to effective collaboration and policy development. Of particular importance to the IGP's approach is the way in which it integrates non-academic expertise into its knowledge generation by engaging with governments, policy makers, business, civil society, the arts and local communities.

Abstract

The Maisha Bora Index (MBI), developed by the Institute for Global Prosperity at University College London, provides an innovative approach for assessing prosperity in unplanned settlements of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Moving beyond traditional economic indicators, the MBI integrates a multidimensional framework based on the lived experiences and aspirations of residents.
It incorporates economic security, social cohesion, environmental sustainability, and governance dimensions to provide a holistic understanding of prosperity. This paper outlines the Index's conceptual framework, data collection process, indicator selection criteria, and validation methods. The MBI was implemented in three research sites— Bonde la Mpunga, Keko Machungwa, and Mji Mpya— capturing the diversity of socio-economic conditions and urban development challenges in Dar es Salaam. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative research, household surveys, and participatory citizen science methodologies to ensure local engagement and contextual precision. The MBI is calculated through a hierarchical structure: measures collected via the questionnaire are used to calculate indicators; indicators form subdomains, and subdomains are grouped into domains. To ensure robustness and accuracy, the study employed statistical techniques such as post-stratification weighting, Z-score normalisation, and sensitivity analysis, allowing for adjustments that enhance the reliability of findings across different settlements. The results offer insights into key enablers and barriers to prosperity in unplanned settlements, providing actionable knowledge for policymakers, NGOs, and community leaders. The participatory nature of the Maisha Bora Index ensures that communities are pivotal in defining and measuring prosperity, reinforcing its practical significance in shaping inclusive urban development strategies.

Keywords

01
Introduction

1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The Maisha Bora Index (MBI)[1] is part of the Institute for Global Prosperity's (IGP) global effort to redefine and measure prosperity in diverse contexts. It builds upon the Citizen Prosperity Index (CPI) methodology developed in east London (Melios et al. 2024), adapting its framework to the realities of unplanned settlements in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (Woodcraft et al. 2020).

Traditional economic indicators often fail to capture the multidimensional nature of prosperity, particularly in rapidly urbanising and resource-constrained environments. The MBI addresses this gap by integrating a holistic, community-driven approach prioritising local knowledge and lived experiences. It explores key factors that enable and hinder prosperity in unplanned settlements, emphasising the interconnected nature of economic security, governance, social well-being, and environmental conditions.

The MBI was developed through a participatory research approach involving local residents, community organisations, and citizen scientists. This ensures that the Index reflects the lived realities of those it seeks to measure. The study was conducted across three research sites—Bonde la Mpunga, Keko Machungwa, and Mji Mpya—selected to represent a range of socio-economic conditions and development trajectories.

As a multidimensional tool, the MBI allows for granular analysis at the household, neighbourhood, and city-wide levels, enabling policymakers, NGOs, and urban planners to design targeted interventions that foster inclusive prosperity. By integrating objective and subjective measures, it provides an evidence-based framework for assessing and addressing the diverse challenges faced by unplanned settlements in Dar es Salaam.

1.2 WHO CAN USE IT?

The MBI serves as a valuable tool for a wide range of stakeholders involved in development, governance, and social policy, in Dar es Salaam, and in and across Africa. By offering a multidimensional measure of prosperity that reflects the realities of unplanned settlements, the MBI provides actionable insights that can inform evidence-based policymaking, improve resource allocation, and support targeted interventions to foster inclusive and sustainable development.

Local and national governments can utilise the MBI to assess socio-economic conditions in unplanned settlements and design policies addressing critical infrastructure gaps, service provision, and economic opportunities. By tracking prosperity at the household and community levels, policymakers can evaluate the long-term effects of infrastructure projects, social welfare initiatives, and land tenure reforms. Municipal authorities and urban planners can further benefit from the Index by using it to integrate prosperity indicators into local development strategies, ensuring that unplanned settlements are not overlooked in city-wide planning processes.

NGOs and community-based organisations play a crucial role in service delivery and advocacy, particularly in areas where state interventions are limited. The MBI allows these organisations to understand residents' needs better, evaluate their programmes' effectiveness, and advocate for more inclusive policies. By providing a rigorous, community-driven measure of prosperity, the Index strengthens participatory development approaches and amplifies the voices of unplanned settlement residents in policy discussions.

International development agencies and donors supporting resilience and poverty alleviation efforts can use the MBI to ensure that funding decisions align with local communities' priorities and lived experiences. Given the increasing global attention on sustainable development, the Index offers a reliable framework for evaluating the impact of international initiatives and aligning them with local development goals (Lavell et al. 2023).

The academic and research community also benefits from the MBI, providing a unique dataset for studying urban development, unplanned economies, and social policy in African cities. The Index's combination of qualitative and quantitative measures offers a robust foundation for comparative research, allowing scholars to examine patterns of prosperity across different contexts.

By tailoring the Index to the unique challenges of unplanned settlements in Dar es Salaam while maintaining its relevance for other African contexts, it provides a critical tool for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners seeking to foster sustainable and inclusive development.

1.3 PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE INDEX

The Index aims to provide a comprehensive, community-driven framework for measuring prosperity in unplanned settlements, offering an alternative to conventional economic indicators that often fail to capture the lived realities of African populations. The study seeks to generate robust, policy-relevant insights into the factors that enable or hinder prosperity in unplanned settlements, facilitating more inclusive and sustainable development.

Unlike traditional metrics, the MBI adopts a multidimensional approach integrating economic security, governance, social well-being, and environmental sustainability. By incorporating both subjective and objective measures, the Index ensures that the perspectives of residents are central to defining and evaluating prosperity. This participatory methodology strengthens its relevance, ensuring that it reflects the priorities and aspirations of those living in unplanned settlements.
The primary objective of the MBI is to establish a reliable, evidence-based tool that can inform decision-making at multiple levels, from local and national governments to NGOs, international development agencies, and community organisations. By systematically measuring prosperity across different neighbourhoods, the study enables policymakers to identify disparities, assess the impact of interventions, and design targeted policies that address socioeconomic inequalities in rapidly growing cities.

A key goal of the MBI is to contribute to a broader reconceptualisation of prosperity that aligns with the needs of African populations. Unplanned settlements are often framed in terms of deficit and deprivation, overlooking the resilience, agency, and collective action that underpin everyday life in these communities. By shifting the focus from a narrow, deficit-based perspective to a more nuanced understanding of prosperity, the MBI challenges dominant narratives and provides a basis for rethinking policy approaches.

Furthermore, the MBI builds on the methodology of the Citizen Prosperity Index (CPI) developed for east London (Melios et al. 2024), adapting its conceptual framework to the unique socio-economic and spatial dynamics of Dar es Salaam. It demonstrates how prosperity measurement tools can be tailored to diverse environments while maintaining comparability across different regions. The findings from this study will contribute to the ongoing refinement of the Index and inform future applications in other places.

The Maisha Bora Index aspires to bridge the gap between academic research and applied policymaking by offering a locally rooted yet globally adaptable framework. It provides a structured yet flexible approach to measuring prosperity, equipping stakeholders with the knowledge needed to design interventions that improve the quality of life for populations in Dar es Salaam and beyond.

02
Data Collection Approach

2.1 STUDY AREAS AND THEIR DESCRIPTIONS

The Maisha Bora Index was implemented in three research sites in Dar es Salaam: Bonde la Mpunga, Keko Machungwa, and Mji Mpya. These locations were selected to capture the diversity of socio-economic conditions, infrastructure development, and urbanisation patterns in the city's unplanned settlements. Each site was further divided into different sub-divisions[1], with 11 in Bonde la Mpunga, 7 in Mji Mpya, and 5 in Keko Machungwa.

The study follows a similar approach to the *Prosperity in east London* 2021–2031 Longitudinal Study (Woodcraft et al. 2024; Woodcraft and Chan 2022), prioritising granular, hyper-local data to capture the nuanced dimensions of prosperity at the community level[2].

Bonde la Mpunga (BM) is located in Kinondoni Municipality and consists of diverse neighbourhoods with mixed socio-economic conditions. The study sample in this area included 602 households. Bonde la Mpunga benefits from its coastal location and has relatively high-income residents compared to other unplanned settlements. It has better access to private healthcare facilities and a growing real estate market, yet inequalities persist, particularly in access to basic services and secure land tenure.

Keko Machungwa (KM) is situated in Temeke Municipality and features a mix of low- and middle-income households. The study sample in this area comprised 576 households. Keko Machungwa is strategically located near Dar es Salaam's central business district, higher education institutions, and public facilities, making it an economic hub for various unplanned and formal activities. However, overcrowding, insecure housing, and inadequate waste management systems impact overall prosperity in the settlement.

Mji Mpya (MM) is in Ilala Municipality, near major industrial and market areas. It represents a predominantly low-income population experiencing significant livelihood challenges. The study sample in Mji Mpya included 583 households. Residents face persistent issues such as poor infrastructure, high unemployment rates, and limited access to clean water and sanitation. Despite these difficulties, strong community networks and unplanned economic activities provide resilience and avenues for local development.

These three study areas were selected to ensure that the Maisha Bora Index captures a broad spectrum of socio-economic realities in Dar es Salaam's unplanned settlements. By examining how prosperity is shaped in different environments, the study provides valuable insights for policymakers, planners, and community organisations seeking to improve living conditions in rapidly expanding cities.

2.2 DATA SOURCES AND COLLECTION METHODS

The Index is based on a mixed-methods approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies. The study employs primary data gathered through household surveys, supplemented by qualitative insights from community-led research. A total of 1,761 households were surveyed across the three research sites[3].

The household survey was designed to capture detailed information on key dimensions of prosperity, including access to services, livelihood security, housing conditions, social cohesion, governance, and environmental factors. It included a combination of standardised questions adapted from national and international surveys and locally developed questions tailored to the specific context of unplanned settlements in Dar es Salaam.

The survey was conducted by trained citizen scientists recruited from the study areas to ensure cultural and contextual relevance. These citizen scientists received extensive training in data collection techniques, ethical considerations, and survey administration from the UCL Citizen Science Academy. Their involvement not only enhanced the accuracy of responses but also fostered greater trust between researchers and participants.

In addition to the household survey, the study incorporated qualitative research methods, including focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. These qualitative components provided a

deeper contextual understanding and allowed us to identify locally relevant prosperity indicators. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data ensures that the MBI captures both measurable socio-economic conditions and residents' lived experiences, reinforcing its reliability as a community-driven measure of prosperity.

2.3 TREATMENT OF MISSING DATA AND POST-STRATIFICATION WEIGHTS

To ensure the integrity and representativeness of the data, the Index employs rigorous processes for handling missing data and applying post-stratification weights. Missing data is a common challenge in large-scale surveys, particularly in unplanned settlements where mobility, employment conditions, and access to formal records can affect response rates. To address this, actual survey responses are prioritised, and imputation techniques are applied only when necessary.

When data for a specific indicator is missing, the most recent known value is used where possible. If no reliable data is available, imputation methods are applied case-by-case, using external datasets relevant to Tanzania and the broader African context. Unlike the Citizen Prosperity Index developed in east London, which drew on datasets from the Office for National Statistics, Understanding Society and Eurobarometer, this study relies on Afrobarometer and national census data to ensure consistency in estimates and align missing values with regional socio-economic patterns.

Post-stratification weighting is used to correct sampling imbalances and ensure that survey results are representative of the study areas. The process begins with stratification, in which the population is divided into key demographic groups based on age, gender, income, and education. Population proportions for each stratum are then obtained from official census data and Afrobarometer reports. Sample proportions are compared to these known population distributions, and post-stratification weights are calculated by dividing the population proportion by the corresponding sample proportion.

This process ensures that underrepresented groups are appropriately weighted in the final dataset.

Applying post-stratification weights helps align the data with broader population characteristics, improving its reliability for cross-settlement comparisons. Sensitivity analyses are conducted to test the robustness of the weighting approach and verify that no individual subgroup disproportionately influences overall index scores. This systematic approach ensures that the Index reflects the diverse realities of unplanned settlements in Dar es Salaam and provides a strong empirical foundation for policy recommendations.

Fig. 1 Map of Dar es Salaam city showing the three unplanned settlements of Mji Mpya, Bonde La Mpunga and Keko Machungwa.

[1]The term "sub-divisions" is used here to denote sub-sections of each research site. Alternative terminology may be considered based on local administrative definitions.
[2]Like the east London study, the Maisha Bora Index adopts a fine-grained approach to data collection, ensuring that prosperity is measured at a level that reflects local variation within unplanned settlements.
[3]The study surveyed 602 households in Bonde la Mpunga, 576 in Keko Machungwa, and 583 in Mji Mpya.

Developing the Maisha Bora Index

03
Methodology for Building the Index

3.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RATIONALE

The Index is grounded in a multidimensional conceptualisation of prosperity that moves beyond traditional economic indicators to capture broader aspects of prosperity, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. It follows the same principles as the Citizen Prosperity Index (CPI) (Melios et al. 2024), ensuring consistency in measuring prosperity across different contexts while adapting the framework to the specific realities of unplanned settlements in Dar es Salaam.

This approach draws on the capabilities framework pioneered by Sen (1999) and further developed by Nussbaum (2000), which emphasises the conditions that enable individuals to lead fulfilling lives rather than focusing solely on material wealth. The study also incorporates insights from work on alternative prosperity measurement frameworks (Stiglitz et al. 2009; Moore and Woodcraft 2019; Woodcraft and Anderson 2019), reinforcing the idea that prosperity should be measured through a holistic lens that reflects people's lived experiences.

The Index operationalises this perspective through five core domains: *(i) Foundations of Prosperity, (ii) Opportunities and Aspirations, (iii) Power, Voice and Influence, (iv) Belonging, Identities and Culture, and (v) Health and Healthy Neighbourhoods.* These domains were identified through participatory research involving local residents and community organisations, ensuring that the Index reflects contextually relevant definitions of prosperity.

By following the same methodological foundations as the east London study, this research maintains some comparability with international prosperity indices while adapting its structure to the realities of urban development in Africa. It contributes to an emerging body of work that seeks to redefine prosperity through locally grounded, community-driven approaches.

3.2 WEIGHTING TECHNIQUES

The Index follows a structured approach to weighting indicators to ensure a balanced representation of different prosperity dimensions. Consistent with the methodology of the CPI (Melios et al. 2024), all indicators within each subdomain are initially assigned equal weights. This approach prevents any indicator from disproportionately influencing the overall results and ensures comparability across study areas.

The equal-weighting approach also provides flexibility for end-users, allowing them to apply their weighting scheme if required. This adaptability is particularly valuable in policy and research contexts where decision-makers may wish to prioritise certain domains based on economic, social, or political conditions. By not imposing fixed weights, the Index remains responsive to evolving priorities while maintaining a robust and transparent measurement framework.

As the methodology evolves, there are plans to explore more sophisticated weighting methods, including Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), which can account for the relative importance of indicators based on empirical relationships within the dataset. SEM has been widely used in multidimensional prosperity measurement (Stiglitz et al. 2009) and offers a statistically rigorous way to refine weighting structures while preserving the participatory and community-driven nature of the Index.

Normalisation is applied during the index construction process to ensure that indicators are comparable across different domains. The method used for normalisation is detailed in the next section.

3.2 Z-SCORE NORMALISATION PROCESS

In data analysis, researchers often face the challenge of comparing information in different forms or scales. This challenge is akin to comparing prices across countries with different currencies. Z-score normalisation is a powerful statistical tool that addresses this issue, acting as a universal converter for diverse data types.

Z-score normalisation standardises data at its core, enabling meaningful comparisons between datasets originally measured on different scales or units. This technique is particularly valuable in two key scenarios: first, when comparing data from multiple sources, and second, when ensuring that data meets the assumptions of normal distribution required for many statistical analyses.

Z-score normalisation transforms each data point relative to the dataset's mean and standard deviation. The formula for calculating a Z-score is:

$$Z_i = \frac{X_i - \mu}{\sigma}$$

where Z_i represents the Z-score, X_i is the individual data point, μ is the mean of the dataset, and σ is the standard deviation. This transformation quantifies how far a given data point deviates from the dataset's mean, measured in standard deviations.

A practical application of this method can be observed in the multi-level analysis of prosperity in Dar es Salaam. This approach allows the Index to assess prosperity at different geographical scales, offering a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of socio-economic conditions.

The analysis in Dar es Salaam is conducted at three distinct levels: the neighbourhood level, the ward level, and the city-wide level. Neighbourhoods represent the smallest unit of analysis within unplanned settlements, while wards serve as larger administrative units. The process begins by calculating Z-scores at each level using level-specific means and standard deviations. This provides insights into how individuals or areas compare to others within the same geographical unit.

Z-score at the neighbourhood level:

$$Z_{neighbourhood} = \frac{value_i - \mu_{neighbourhood}}{\sigma_{individual,neighbourhood}}$$

Z-score at the ward level:

$$Z_{ward} = \frac{value_i - \mu_{ward}}{\sigma_{individual,ward}}$$

Z-score at the city-wide level:

$$Z_{city} = \frac{value_i - \mu_{city}}{\sigma_{individual,city}}$$

The next stage involves comparing these Z-scores across different levels. This comparison reveals how an individual's or a community's relative prosperity shifts depending on the geographical scale. For example, a neighbourhood may appear relatively prosperous compared to others within its ward but may rank lower when compared city-wide. Similarly, a ward that ranks lower than Dar es Salaam may contain neighbourhoods with relatively higher levels of prosperity.

The final and crucial step in this process is standardising Z-scores across all levels. This is analogous to adjusting for inflation when comparing prices across time periods. Standardisation ensures the data is comparable across different geographical scales, accounting for population size and distribution variations. This step is essential for creating a fair and accurate representation of prosperity across Dar es Salaam.

This multi-level normalisation approach offers several key benefits. First, it ensures comparability of data across different administrative and spatial levels, providing a more comprehensive understanding of prosperity patterns. Second, it allows for a nuanced examination of socio-economic conditions within and across unplanned settlements. Most importantly, it facilitates the fair integration of data from different scales into a single composite prosperity index.

In conclusion, applying Z-score normalisation to multi-level analysis in Dar es Salaam demonstrates the strength of this statistical technique in understanding complex socioeconomic phenomena. By enabling accurate comparisons and integration of data across multiple levels, this approach provides a robust foundation for analysing prosperity trends. This methodology not only enhances our understanding of inequalities but also serves as a model for similar multi-level analyses in other African cities. By bridging different data types and geographical scales, Z-score normalisation ensures that the Index generates valuable insights for policymakers, urban planners, and researchers.

3.4 VALIDATION AND ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

The Index is subjected to validation and robustness checks to ensure its reliability and accuracy in measuring prosperity in unplanned settlements. A key aspect of this process involves benchmarking the Index against external datasets, such as Afrobarometer and national census data. These comparisons help identify discrepancies and ensure that the Index is consistent with broader socio-economic trends in Tanzania.

Robustness checks are also conducted to test the sensitivity of the Index to different methodological choices, including the treatment of missing data and indicator selection. These checks involve recalculating the Index under different scenarios to verify the stability of results. Sensitivity analyses are particularly crucial in understanding how variations in the weighting of indicators or the inclusion/exclusion of specific data points impact overall index scores.

Additionally, community validation workshops are conducted to ensure that the Index aligns with local experiences of prosperity. By incorporating feedback from residents and community organisations, the Index remains responsive to evolving socio-economic realities in Dar es Salaam. This participatory validation process strengthens the credibility of the Index and ensures its relevance for policy and programmatic interventions.

By grounding the Index in community-identified priorities and a multidimensional understanding of prosperity, we provide a more accurate and contextually relevant tool for understanding and promoting prosperity in unplanned settlements. This approach moves beyond traditional, economy-focused indices, offering a nuanced measure of prosperity that captures the lived realities of populations in Tanzania.

04
Future Directions and Opportunities

The Index represents a significant step forward in measuring prosperity in unplanned settlements. Future developments will focus on refining the methodology and expanding its application across diverse global contexts to further enhance its analytical depth, comparability, and adaptability.

4.1 REFINING THE METHODOLOGY

The current methodology follows an equal-weighting approach, where all indicators within each subdomain contribute equally to the overall Index score. This method ensures transparency, ease of interpretation, and flexibility, allowing policymakers and researchers to apply their own weighting schemes if needed. However, equal weighting assumes that all indicators are of equal importance, which may not always align with real-world relationships between different dimensions of prosperity.

An alternative approach is Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), which estimates weights based on statistical relationships between indicators. SEM provides a more empirical foundation for assigning weights, accounting for the varying significance of indicators in shaping prosperity. This approach has been widely used in multidimensional prosperity measurement (Stiglitz et al. 2009) and offers greater precision in identifying key drivers of prosperity. However, SEM also comes with increased complexity, requiring more advanced statistical expertise, potentially making it less accessible for policymakers and practitioners.

A key consideration for the future of the Index is how to balance simplicity and statistical rigour. While equal weighting ensures ease of use and comparability across contexts, SEM could enhance the Index's analytical power by providing more nuanced insights into the structure of prosperity. A hybrid approach may offer the most practical path forward, where equal weighting is retained for broader comparability but refined weighting techniques are tested for in-depth analysis.

4.2 FROM EAST LONDON TO DAR ES SALAAM AND BEYOND

The Maisha Bora Index is itself an expansion of the original Citizen Prosperity Index, first developed in east London (Melios et al. 2024). This study demonstrates how a common prosperity measurement framework can be adapted to vastly different contexts, from a highly developed city like London to unplanned settlements in Dar es Salaam. While the core conceptual structure remains the same—measuring prosperity across economic, social, and environmental dimensions—the Index has been tailored to reflect local realities, including different governance structures, informal economies, and infrastructure challenges.

This expansion highlights the broader potential of the Index to serve as a globally adaptable framework for measuring prosperity. By maintaining a balance between standardised core indicators and context-specific measures, the Index can be applied to diverse settings while ensuring meaningful comparisons. Future work will focus on further refining this adaptability, testing the Index in additional cities, and strengthening its role as a tool for policymakers seeking evidence-based approaches to development.

As the Index continues to evolve, its methodological advancements and expanding global applications will reinforce its role as a critical tool for shaping inclusive urban policies. These developments will ensure that the Index remains relevant, flexible, and impactful in diverse environments worldwide.

05
Conclusion

5.1 SUMMARY

The Index represents a significant advancement in conceptualising and measuring prosperity in diverse contexts. By moving beyond traditional economic indicators and incorporating a multidimensional approach—capturing economic security, governance, social cohesion, and environmental quality—the MBI provides a more holistic understanding of prosperity. The participatory research model, which integrates community perspectives into both the design and data collection process, ensures that the Index reflects the lived experiences and priorities of residents.

The methodology outlined in this paper demonstrates a rigorous and transparent approach to index construction. Each step is designed to ensure robustness and relevance, from selecting study areas and structured data collection to applying Z-score normalisation and considering evolving weighting techniques such as Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). These methodological choices establish a scientifically sound and adaptable framework for capturing prosperity in rapidly changing environments.

Furthermore, the expansion of the Index from its original foundation in east London to Dar es Salaam highlights its versatility as a global measurement tool. The ability to apply a common framework across diverse socio-economic and spatial contexts enhances its comparative value while ensuring adaptability to local needs. By integrating primary and secondary data sources, the Index evolves as a dynamic and scalable tool capable of informing both localised policy interventions and broader international development strategies.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

The Index has significant implications for policy and practice at local, national, and global levels. By offering a multidimensional perspective on prosperity, it provides policymakers, urban planners, and community organisations with a tool that highlights economic conditions and social, political, and environmental factors shaping prosperity.

At the local level, the Index enables governments and municipal authorities to design more effective interventions in unplanned settlements. By identifying specific prosperity deficits—whether in livelihood security, governance, or access to services—decision-makers can implement targeted policies that address community needs in a more equitable and sustainable manner. Additionally, as a co-produced framework, the Index strengthens community engagement in policymaking, ensuring that development efforts align with local priorities.

Nationally, the Index serves as an instrument for evaluating urban development policies and tracking their impact over time. Incorporating both primary and secondary data allows governments to assess progress toward inclusive prosperity and make evidence-based adjustments to planning and social protection initiatives. The Index also provides a means for assessing the effectiveness of interventions by non-governmental organisations and international agencies working in poverty alleviation.

On a global scale, the adaptability of the Index presents an opportunity for crossregional learning and policy exchange. As an expansion of the Prosperity Index first developed in east London, this study demonstrates how a shared methodological framework can be applied in different socio-economic and spatial contexts. Future applications in other settings will strengthen its role as a comparative tool, allowing policymakers and researchers to identify universal and context-specific drivers of prosperity.

Beyond its role in policy assessment, the Index challenges conventional success metrics. Prioritising well-being, equity, and social cohesion encourages a shift from purely economic indicators to more holistic measures of prosperity. This redefinition is particularly relevant in rapidly urbanising regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, where unplanned settlements are expanding, and traditional economic measures often fail to capture the complexities of life.

The Index provides a structured yet flexible tool for governments, researchers, and development

organisations by embedding community-driven insights into decision-making processes. As challenges evolve, the Index offers a pathway for rethinking prosperity in an inclusive, locally grounded, and globally relevant way.

5.3 FINAL THOUGHTS

As the Index continues to evolve, it holds the potential to redefine how prosperity is measured and understood in different contexts. The Index provides a more inclusive and representative measure of prosperity by prioritising multidimensional prosperity, community participation, and adaptability across various settings. This study demonstrates that prosperity cannot be captured solely through economic indicators but must reflect the broader lived experiences of communities, particularly in rapidly changing environments.

The methodological advancements planned will further enhance its analytical depth and policy relevance. Expanding its application to additional cities will create a robust comparative framework for cross-regional learning and a deeper understanding of the structural factors influencing prosperity.

This research also reinforces the value of a participatory data collection and analysis approach. By involving communities directly in defining and measuring prosperity, the Index challenges top-down approaches to development and offers a rigorous and locally meaningful tool. This shift in measurement is critical for shaping policies that are not only data-driven but also responsive to the needs and aspirations of those they seek to serve.

In conclusion, the Maisha Bora Index represents a pioneering effort to develop a globally adaptable yet locally relevant framework for measuring prosperity. As it expands its reach and continues to evolve methodologically, the Index can influence both local policies and broader international discussions on creating inclusive and sustainable futures. Bridging academic research and real-world policymaking provides a structured approach to redefining prosperity in the 21st century.

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Appendix A

Domain	Subdomain	Headline Indicators
Foundations of Prosperity	Local Access to Essential Services	Childcare, Healthcare, Basic Education, Dispensary & Affordable Medicine
	Access to Good Settlement Infrastructure	Clean & Safe Water, Sanitation, Drainage, Energy, Roads
	Safe Settlements	Peace & Harmonious Social Relationships, Lack of Crime, Feelings of Safety, Lack of Disease, Safe from Disaster Risk
	Sercure Livelihood	Decent & Secure Income, Security of Residency, Ability to Satisfy Basic Needs
Opportunities & Aspirations	Business & Entrepreneurship	Enterprise Training, Local Access to Markets, Access to Capital, Community Capacity to Develop Enterprises by & for the Settlement
	Access to Further Education	Further & Vocational Training, Money Management Training, Educational Support for Youth
	Land, Settlement & Home Upgrading	Access to Land, Able to Improve Housing, Settlement Upgrading, Education on Land Rights
	Community Involvement & Action	Community Capacity Building, Information, Consultation & Mobilisation on Decisions Affecting the Settlement, Collaborative Dialogue with Development Stakeholders
Power, Voice & Influence	Accountable & Transparent Leadership	Lack of Corruption, Trust in Government/Leaders
	Political Inclusion	Representative Democracy, Feelings of Political Inclusion
	Independence & Choice	Personal Independence, Personal Choice, Hope for the Future
	Freedom, Justice & Rights	Human Rights, Female Empowerment, Access to Justice, Freedom of Speech, Political Action
	Community Empowerment	Skills & Capabilities for Knowledge Production & Action, Community Action

Domain	Subdomain	Headline Indicators
Belonging, Identities & Culture	Settlement Identity & Reputation	
	Cultural Identities & Religious Practices	Respect for Place of Worship, Harmonious Social & Cultural Practices
	Good Social Relationships in the Community	Good Family Relationships, Supportive Social Relationships in the Settlement, Social Networks to Call on in an Emergency
	Feelings of Belonging & Inclusion	Feelings of Belonging, Feeling Respected, Feeling Settlement Community is Cohesive
Health & Healthy Neighbourhoods	Clean, Healthy & Safe Settlement Environment	Clean Air & Unpolluted Environment, Safe Roads & Paths in Settlement, Mitigating Disaster Risk, Inclusive Settlement Upgrading, Accessible Public & Play Spaces, Provision of Safe Water, Sanitation & Drainage
	Good Quality & Accessible City Infrastructure	Transport Connections to/from Settlement, Communications Infrastructure, Access to Emergency Services
	Good Health & Accessible Health Services	Access to Health Insurance, Good Physical & Mental Health, Able to Access Health Services, Maternal & Child Health, Access to Health Education on Hygiene, Nutrition & Pregnancy

Institute for Global Prosperity

Research at the UCL Institute for Global Prosperity aims to generate new insights about sustainable and inclusive prosperity and provide new models for developing and interpreting evidence.

Underlying our research is a rethinking of what we mean by prosperity. Prosperity must mean enabling people to flourish in ways beyond financial growth – and doing so equitably and sustainably, for humankind and the planet. We work with businesses, non-governmental organisations and citizens to produce interdisciplinary methodologies and problem-focused research.

For more information about our wide range of current projects and our innovative Master's and PhD programmes please see:
https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/igp/