



Institute for  
Global Prosperity

# Redefining prosperity with and for communities in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Beyond economic metrics  
for African cities

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**June 2025**



## 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 nonacademic expertise into its knowledge generation by engaging with governments, policy makers, business, civil society, the arts and local communities.

### To be cited as:

Woodcraft, S., Tzivanakis, N., Makoba, F.D., Ndezi, T. (2025) *Redefining prosperity with and for communities in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Beyond economic metrics for African cities*. London: Institute for Global Prosperity, UCL.

First published in June 2025

# Abstract

The Institute for Global Prosperity, in partnership with the Centre for Community Initiatives, is launching the Maisha Bora ('Good Life') Index for Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The Maisha Bora Index is Africa's first citizen-led prosperity measure co-designed over five years with citizen scientists, community members, community leaders and government officials. This working paper summarises headline findings from the Maisha Bora Index. It discusses the implications for urban governance, policy, planning, and development of co-designing new prosperity measures and strategies for action with communities to create more just and inclusive cities.

## About the Maisha Bora Study

The Maisha Bora ('Good Life') Study is an innovative, community-led research project exploring what prosperity means to people living in three unplanned settlements in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania – Mji Mpya, Bonde la Mpunga, and Keko Machungwa.

The goal of the research is to develop new ways of understanding and measuring prosperity that reflect peoples' lived experiences and what supports and what prevents people from living good lives. Residents, community leaders, and NGOs are using the findings to identify priorities for action, develop community-led interventions, and to work with municipal and city officials and public agencies to change policymaking.

The Maisha Bora Study has been co-designed and co-produced by community members and leaders from Mji Mpya, Bonde la Mpunga, and Keko Machungwa, working with the Centre for Community Initiatives (CCI) in Dar es Salaam, and the Institute for Global Prosperity (IGP) at University College London (UCL). The research has been carried out by a team of citizen scientists – people who live and work in the three settlements – trained by the UCL Citizen Science Academy and employed by CCI.

As citizen-led research to define, measure, and act to generate shared prosperity, this is the first project of its kind in Africa.

## Acknowledgements:

A team of citizen scientists, CCI and UCL researchers were involved in all stages of this research. The team includes: Husna Shechonge, Hazilatu Hatibu, Thelaphina Sumuni, Asha Mohamed, Ndimbewlu Kasekwa, Abdul Mwenda, Sheila Ahmada, Mwanate Katibu, Farida Kibwana, Joshua Mtali, Marium Ismail, Haji Mwalimu, Sauda Omary, Kadija Abadallah, Festo D Makoba, Dr Tim Ndezi, Mussa Raido, Anna Mejara, Paul Charles, Emmanuel Osuteye and Christine Xin.

# Executive Summary

## Redefining prosperity with and for communities in African cities

The SDGs are the first universally agreed framework aiming for whole system transformation for global sustainability and future prosperity that leaves no one behind.<sup>(1)</sup> However, there is a gap between the ambitious headline rhetoric of shared prosperity set out in the SDGs 2030 Agenda, which emphasises human flourishing in a broad sense, and the narrow measure of income and consumption growth for the poorest 40% that is used to operationalise and measure shared prosperity.<sup>(2)</sup>

Defining shared prosperity in these narrow monetary terms runs counter to research and policy acknowledging that collective infrastructures and services are necessary to reduce poverty and enable people to live prosperous lives. Universal health and education, transport and communications infrastructure, food security, social services, legal frameworks, rights and responsibilities, and accountable governance are among the shared infrastructures and institutions recognised as key determinants of human flourishing.<sup>(3,4)</sup>

The question of how shared prosperity is defined and operationalised is particularly urgent in African cities facing rapid urbanization, climate vulnerability, infrastructure challenges, increasing poverty and high rates of insecurity. Prosperity measures must recognize the multi-dimensional and multi-scalar drivers and barriers to human flourishing and the agency of communities in creating sustainable futures. Ultimately, meaningful prosperity measurement in African urban contexts requires frameworks developed with—rather than for—communities, respecting their knowledge and priorities while challenging the dominance of externally imposed economic indicators.

The [Maisha Bora \('Good Life'\) Index](#) described in this report emerges from this context. The Maisha Bora Index examines prosperity patterns across three unplanned settlements in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Mji Mpya, Bonde la Mpunga, and Keko Machungwa. It uses a survey of 1,081 households and indicators based on qualitative research about local meanings and lived experiences of prosperity.<sup>(5)</sup> As the first citizen-led, co-produced prosperity measure in Africa it is a radical innovation. The Index demonstrates how locally rooted, participatory approaches to defining prosperity can identify different starting points for urban policies and resource allocation and empower communities to lead on action for prosperity.

## How do citizen-led prosperity measures provide different policy pathways?

The Index reveals complex relationships between demographics and prosperity alongside distinct settlement-specific challenges:

- Formal employment is associated with higher prosperity scores regardless of income level. This implies that promoting steady employment and regular income could be more effective for enhancing overall prosperity and well-being than focusing solely on increasing wages.
- Monthly household incomes range from TSh 12,000 (about USD 4) to TSh 2,000,000 (about USD 870), with construction and service industries dominating local employment. In terms of income composition, nearly half (47.5%) comes from self-employment, further contributing to overall income instability.

- Youth unemployment stands at 25.5% and is more strongly negatively correlated with prosperity than overall unemployment. This likely reflects that young people often face greater challenges in accessing stable, formal employment, making them more vulnerable to income instability and its impacts on well-being.
- A marked gender disparity exists in employment, with 46.2% of men employed compared to 30.5% of women.
- Women demonstrate stronger social cohesion despite economic disadvantages
- Nearly 28% of residents report their health as either 'poor' or 'fair,' highlighting a considerable level of health vulnerability—especially significant given that over 90% of residents lack health insurance.
- Livelihood insecurity is a critical challenge, with Mji Mpya being the most severely affected among the three settlements.
- Basic needs challenges substantially affect residents overall—25% report food insecurity, 15% face water scarcity, and 27% experience electricity shortages—though these figures vary significantly across settlements, with some areas reporting much higher rates of unmet needs than others.

These findings demonstrate the need for demographically targeted interventions while addressing cross-cutting challenges in livelihood security and access to basic services. While distinct, these settlements face similar challenges in infrastructure access, economic security, and basic services, highlighting the need for strategies and policies aimed at enhancing urban prosperity to take account of shared services and spaces that people rely on. This study intends to identify universal patterns and context-specific dynamics by investigating how demographic factors, economic opportunities, and social connections interact within each settlement. These insights will help policymakers develop targeted interventions that build on community strengths while addressing critical issues.

Unlike conventional prosperity measures highlighting income disparities or consumption patterns, these findings reveal the complex interplay between employment stability, social cohesion, and access to infrastructure that shapes prosperity in ways that GDP or household income metrics alone cannot capture. The findings will contribute to broader discussions about urban development in rapidly growing African cities. By demonstrating how prosperity emerges from complex interactions between social, economic and physical infrastructure, the study challenges conventional approaches to urban development. It suggests new pathways for supporting prosperity, well-being and quality of life improvements in unplanned settlements.

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# Introduction

Dar es Salaam is at the forefront of Africa’s urban transformation, embodying the challenges and opportunities of rapid urbanisation.<sup>(6)</sup> It is one of the fastest-growing cities in the world. As of the 2022 national census, the Dar es Salaam Region had a population of 5,383,728.<sup>(7)</sup> The city’s rapid growth is driven by both rural-urban migration and endogenous population increase, with projections indicating that its population will continue to rise significantly in the coming decades.

Rapid population growth in Dar es Salaam has put extreme pressures on the supply of adequate and affordable housing and essential services like water, energy, and transport. As a result about 70% of the population lives in unplanned settlements, which are growing at twice the average rate in the city.<sup>(8)</sup>

Unplanned settlements are found in many African cities and reflect the extreme socio-economic and spatial inequalities linked to intense pressures on land and infrastructure. Many residents of unplanned settlements live in overcrowded conditions in hazardous locations, such as floodplains, riverbanks, wastelands, and polluted industrial areas, which further expose them to risks such as flooding, disease outbreaks further accentuating poverty and inequalities.<sup>(9)</sup> Besides the obvious housing, environmental and infrastructural challenges that residents of unplanned settlements face, they are often excluded from ‘top-down’ or ‘expert-led’ visions, strategies and policies intended to make Global South cities cleaner, safer and more prosperous.<sup>(10-12)</sup>

Unplanned settlements represent critical sites for rethinking how we conceptualise and measure prosperity. Their complex social dynamics, diverse livelihood strategies, and resident-created infrastructure often defy conventional economic metrics, which fail to capture the informal networks, adaptive capacities, and community-driven solutions that sustain daily life. Despite material challenges, these settlements often demonstrate remarkable social cohesion and resilience that traditional prosperity measures render invisible.

The Maisha Bora Study and Index seek to fill that gap – creating an inclusive process that empowers citizens and community organisations to take a lead role in creating policy-relevant knowledge and evidence about actionable pathways to prosperity.

Based on research that has been co-designed and co-produced with residents, community organisations, community leaders, and government officials over five years, the Maisha Bora Index reports on levels of prosperity in three unplanned settlements in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. This work challenges dominant economic-centric approaches to urban development that have consistently failed to improve the quality of life in unplanned settlements. Instead, it provides a new, multi-dimensional framework for understanding and measuring the factors that enable residents to live a good life from their own perspective. By centring settlement residents’ lived experiences and priorities, the Maisha Bora Index demonstrates how prosperity metrics developed with—rather than for—communities can reveal alternative policy pathways invisible to conventional economic indicators.

## How does the Maisha Bora Index differ from the World Bank’s Shared Prosperity Measure?

While both measures seek to capture progress in reducing poverty and promoting well-being, the MBI takes a distinct and more comprehensive approach:

- **Multidimensional Focus:** The MBI focuses on multiple dimensions of prosperity, including health, social cohesion, and access to services, rather than just monetary metrics. While the World Bank’s measure focuses on income and consumption, evidence suggests that income growth alone does not guarantee better life chances. The MBI identifies a broader range of factors that contribute to long-term well-being.
- **Community-Led Design:** The MBI was co-created with local residents to reflect their experiences and priorities. In contrast, the World Bank measure focuses primarily on income growth among the bottom 40% of the population, frequently overlooking the nuanced realities of daily life.
- **Contextual Sensitivity:** Designed for unplanned settlements in Dar es Salaam, the MBI takes into account local conditions and challenges, such as infrastructure constraints and inequalities. This tailored approach offers a more nuanced understanding of prosperity directly applicable to various growth realities.

- **Enhanced Qualitative Insights:** The World Bank’s focus on income growth remains unchanged despite changing terminology. However, the MBI expands on this by incorporating qualitative insights from community members, providing a richer, more comprehensive perspective that bridges the gap between statistical measures and lived experiences of prosperity.

This improved approach recognises that prosperity is more than just the absence of poverty; it is a complex set of factors ranging from economic stability to health and social inclusion that interact dynamically over time.



### 1.1 What changes when communities define prosperity?

The Maisha Bora Study emerges from this context as a novel approach to understanding what constitutes a good life and the pathways towards it, drawing directly on the lived experiences of unplanned settlement residents. Rather than imposing external definitions and metrics this study investigates what prosperity means to residents of three settlements: Mji Mpya, Bonde la Mpunga, and Keko Machungwa.

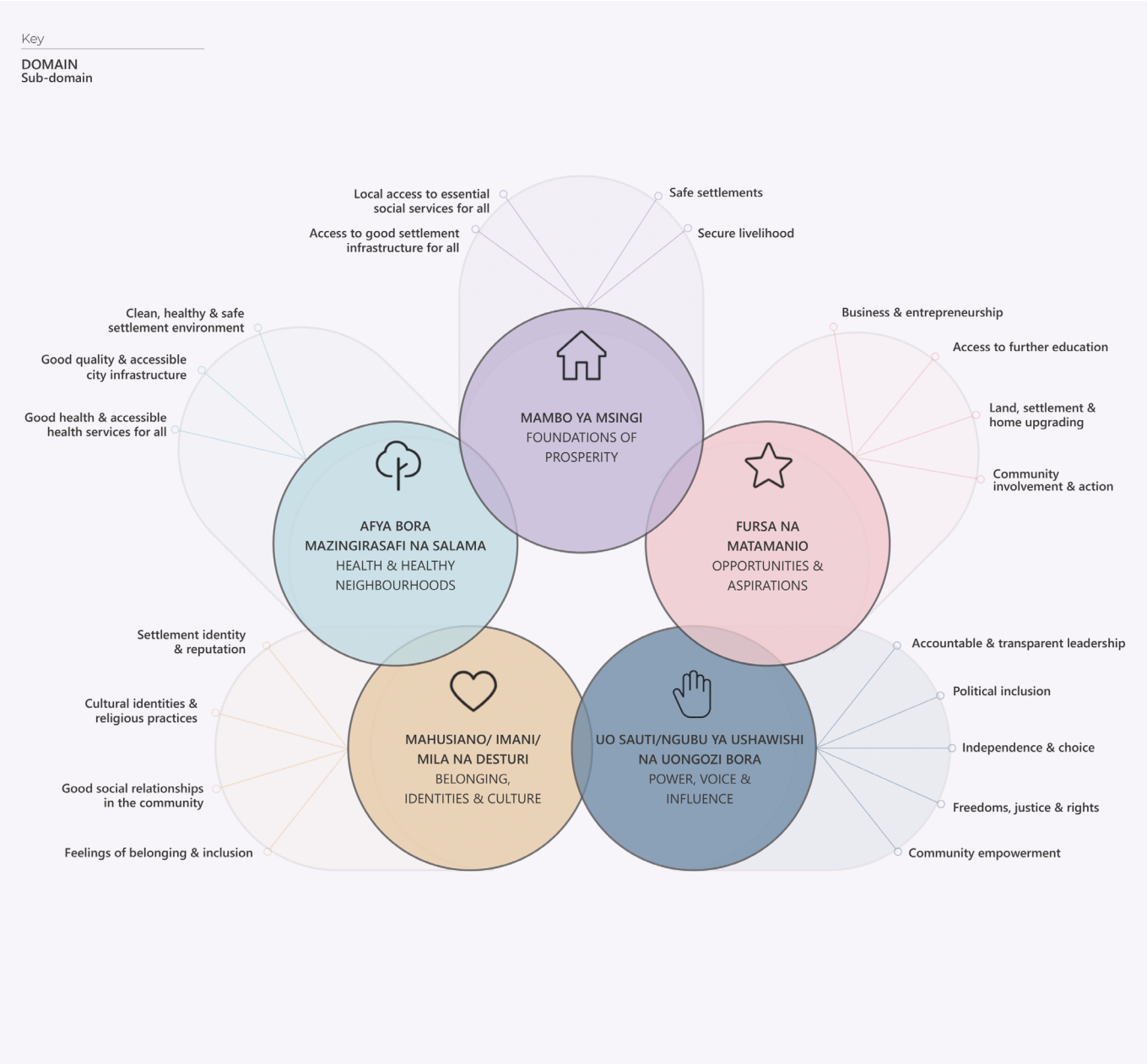
The research methodology combines rigorous quantitative analysis with extensive community engagement. The Maisha Bora Household Survey, which collected data from 1,081 households, provides a solid statistical foundation. However, the true innovation lies in how this data is interwoven with qualitative insights gathered by community researchers, creating a rich tapestry of understanding that bridges the gap between numbers and lived experience.

The Maisha Bora Model (Figure 1) classifies prosperity into five interconnected domains:

- Foundations of Prosperity domain investigates basic needs and economic security
- Opportunities & Aspirations investigates how residents envision and pursue better futures
- Health & Healthy Neighbourhoods domain considers both individual and environmental well-being
- Belonging, Identities, and Culture focuses on the social fabric that holds communities together
- Power, Voice, and Influence examine how residents shape their communities.

This framework expands on traditional economic indicators to capture the multifaceted nature of prosperity as a lived experience and an imaginary. It acknowledges that prosperity in unplanned settlements results from complex interactions between physical infrastructure, economic opportunity, social connections, individual choice and community power.

Figure 1. Maisha Bora Model  
What supports prosperity (Maisha Bora) in informal settlements in Dar es Salaam?



# About the Maisha Bora Index

## 2.1 Research sites

The Maisha Bora Study was conducted in three diverse unplanned settlements in Dar es Salaam—Mji Mpya, Bonde La Mpunga, and Keko Machungwa—each illustrating distinct demographic, infrastructural, and community dynamics. Mji Mpya, with its predominantly young population and rapid growth, contrasts with the more established community structures of Keko Machungwa, where long-term residency fosters robust local networks. Meanwhile, Bonde La Mpunga offers valuable insights into how economic opportunities interact with community cohesion. For detailed settlement profiles, please refer to Appendix C.

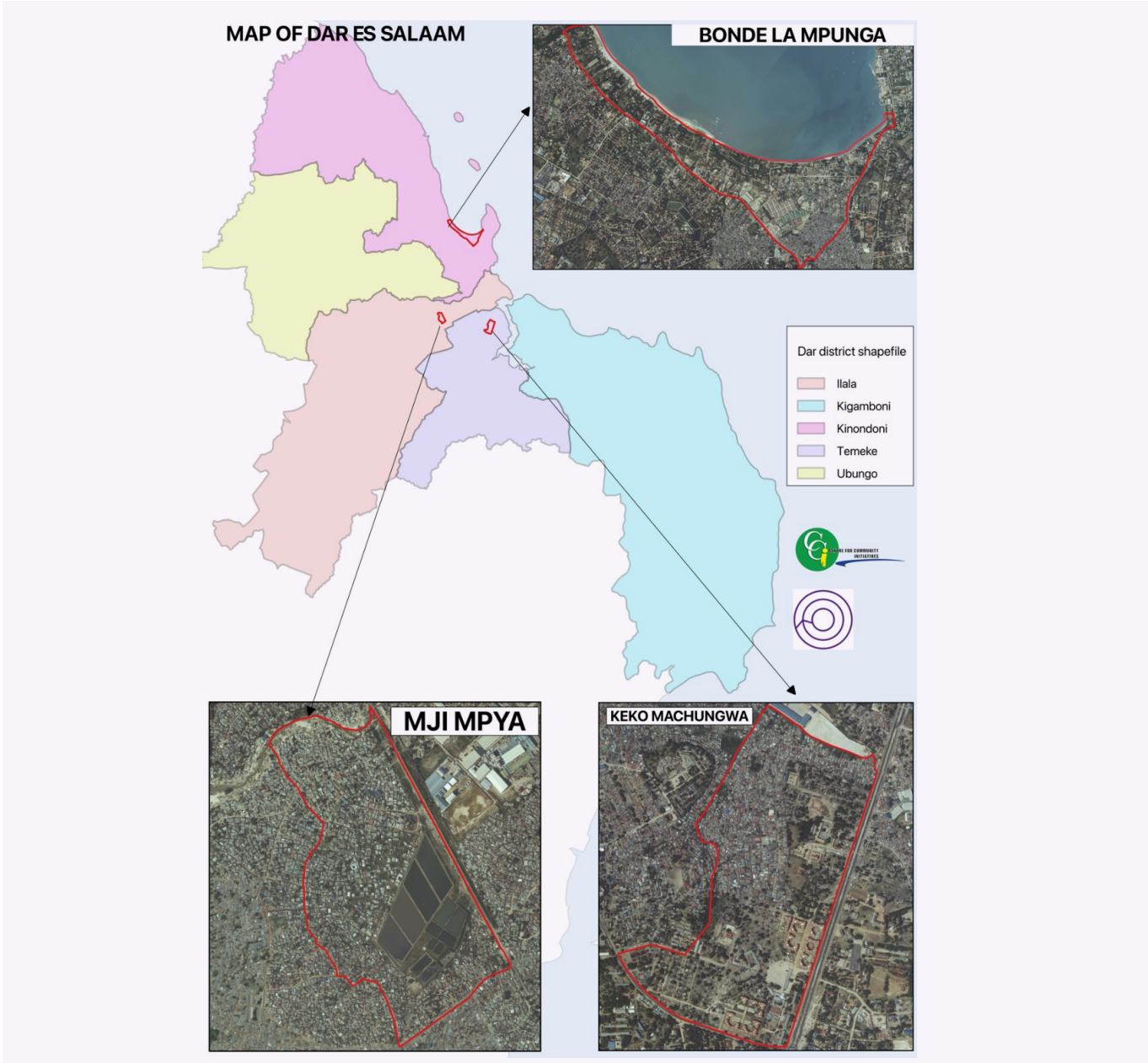
The three research sites are representative of the nature and distribution of unplanned settlements in Dar es Salaam which are typically described as either ‘booming’ or ‘saturated,’ mainly as a reflection of housing vulnerability and density.<sup>(9)</sup> Settlements are described as booming when despite the formation of a critical mass of residents, they continue to attract new residents (including middle-income groups) and have less than 80% of land area used for construction. Saturated settlements are those formed earlier in the city’s growth and typically have more than 80% of land area used for construction. Saturated settlements have also been referred to as homogenous or uniformly unplanned and low-income settlements, as compared to the booming settlements that are mixed.<sup>(13)</sup>

Figure 2 provides a spatial overview of the three research sites within Dar es Salaam, illustrating their geographic distribution across the city’s municipal councils. The map highlights how Mji Mpya and Keko Machungwa are located closer to the central business district, while Bonde la Mpunga is situated in a more peripheral area, reflecting different patterns of urban development and settlement formation.

## 2.2 Constructing the Maisha Bora Index

The [Maisha Bora Index](#) encompasses five domains and sixteen sub-domains, identified by citizen scientists as key drivers of prosperity<sup>(14)</sup>. The Index is derived from the Maisha Bora Household Survey, which sampled 1,081 households—representing 3,842 residents—in Mji Mpya, Bonde La Mpunga, and Keko Machungwa. Each domain and sub-domain is scored on a standardised 0–10 scale, with higher scores reflecting better outcomes.

Figure 2. Research Sites



# What does the Maisha Bora Index tell us about prosperity in Dar es Salaam?

The Maisha Bora Index provides a multidimensional framework for understanding prosperity in three unplanned settlements in Dar es Salaam. This section presents key findings from the Index and the survey, examining shared strengths and challenges across the settlements and unique patterns within each community. The analysis is organised into three interconnected areas: cross-cutting trends affecting all settlements, demographic factors influencing prosperity outcomes, and place-based dynamics shaping community well-being. This layered approach identifies universal patterns and context-specific dynamics, revealing how prosperity emerges from complex interactions between social, economic, and physical infrastructure.

Figure 3 illustrates how average scores across the Maisha Bora Index sub-domains vary by settlement, highlighting both common and distinct prosperity patterns.

Figure 4 demonstrates the power of the Maisha Bora Index methodology to capture prosperity variations at the hyperlocal level. This visualisation displays prosperity patterns for individual neighbourhoods within each settlement, revealing important spatial nuances that aggregated data would obscure. While the density of information makes individual neighbourhood identification challenging, the visualisation serves three critical purposes.

First, it visually demonstrates that significant variations in prosperity can exist within the same settlement, highlighting the importance of hyperlocal data collection. Second, it shows where certain domains (represented by positions on the radial axes) exhibit consistent patterns across neighbourhoods versus where local conditions create divergent outcomes. Third, it provides evidence for policymakers and community leaders that interventions may need to be targeted at the neighbourhood level rather than applied uniformly across settlements.

Figures 5-7 show Maisha Bora Index sub-domain scores per individual settlement sub-domain. The varying patterns across neighbourhoods reinforce the importance of contextual understanding in prosperity measurement and intervention design. This granular approach enables more responsive and effective community-based initiatives that address specific local challenges while building on neighbourhood-specific strengths.

Figure 3. Average Index Subdomain Scores by Research Site





Figure 4. Maisha Bora Index Subdomain Scores Across Individual Neighbourhoods

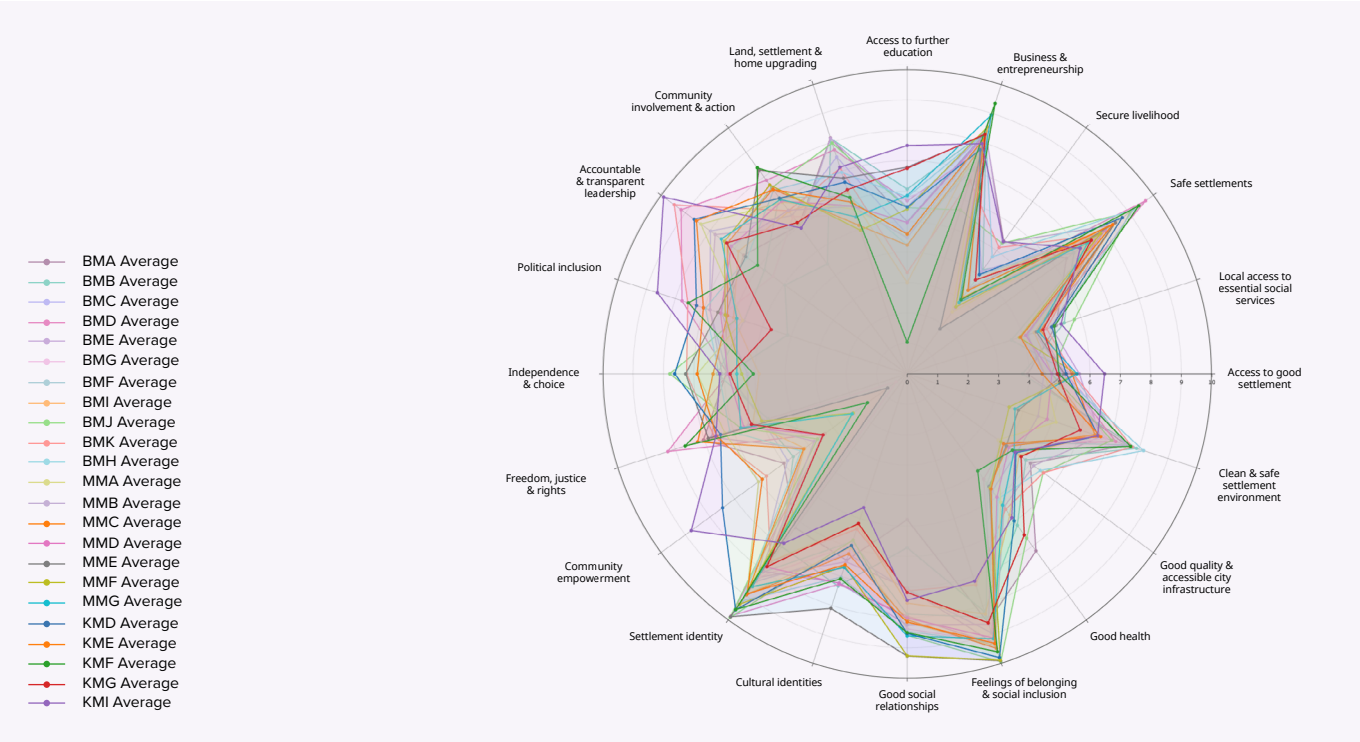


Figure 5. Mji Mpya Maisha Bora Index Subdomain Scores

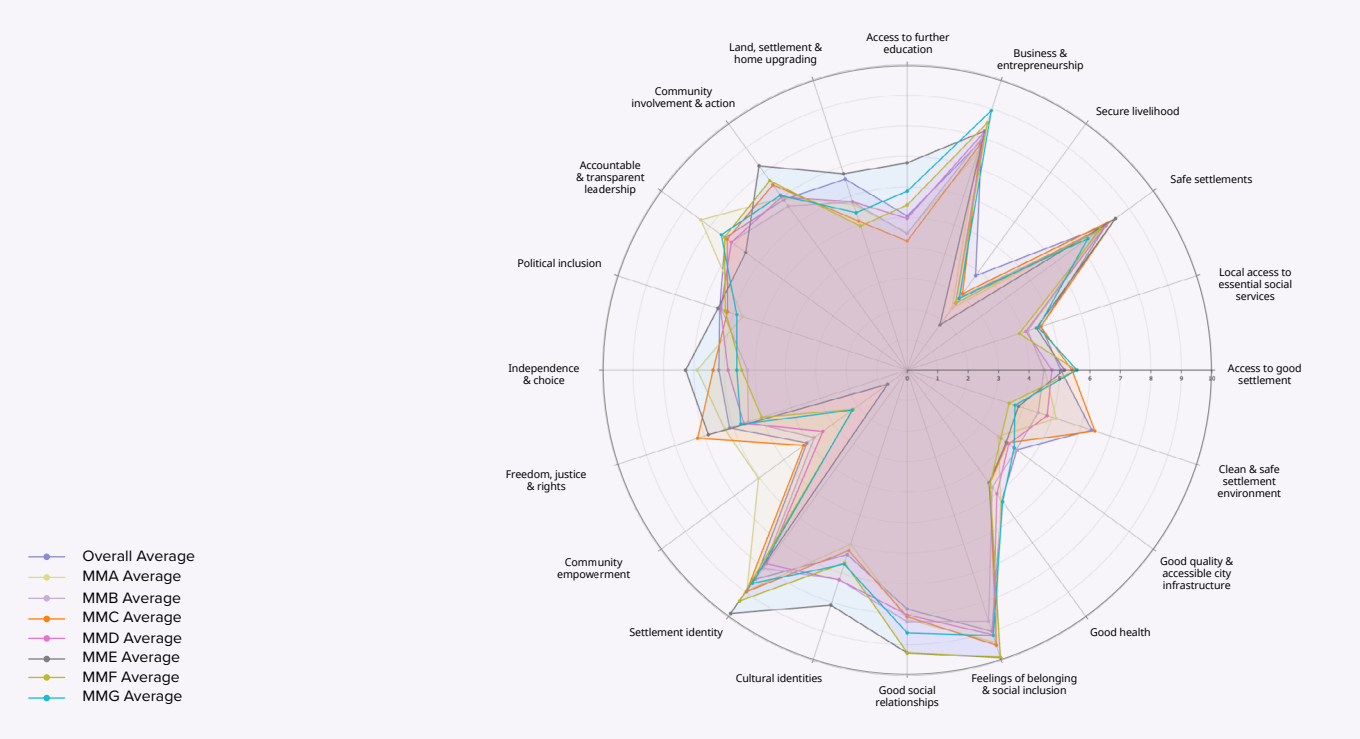


Figure 6. Keko Machungwa Maisha Bora Index Subdomain Scores

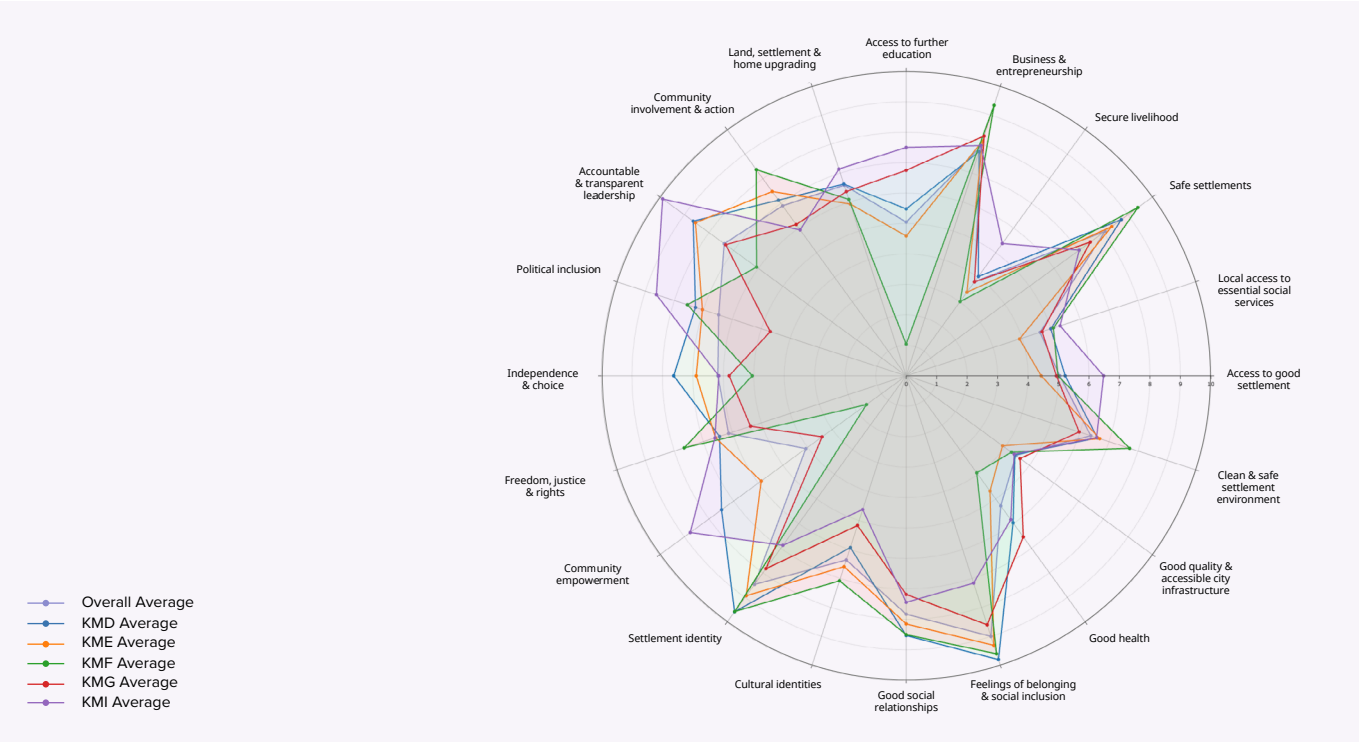
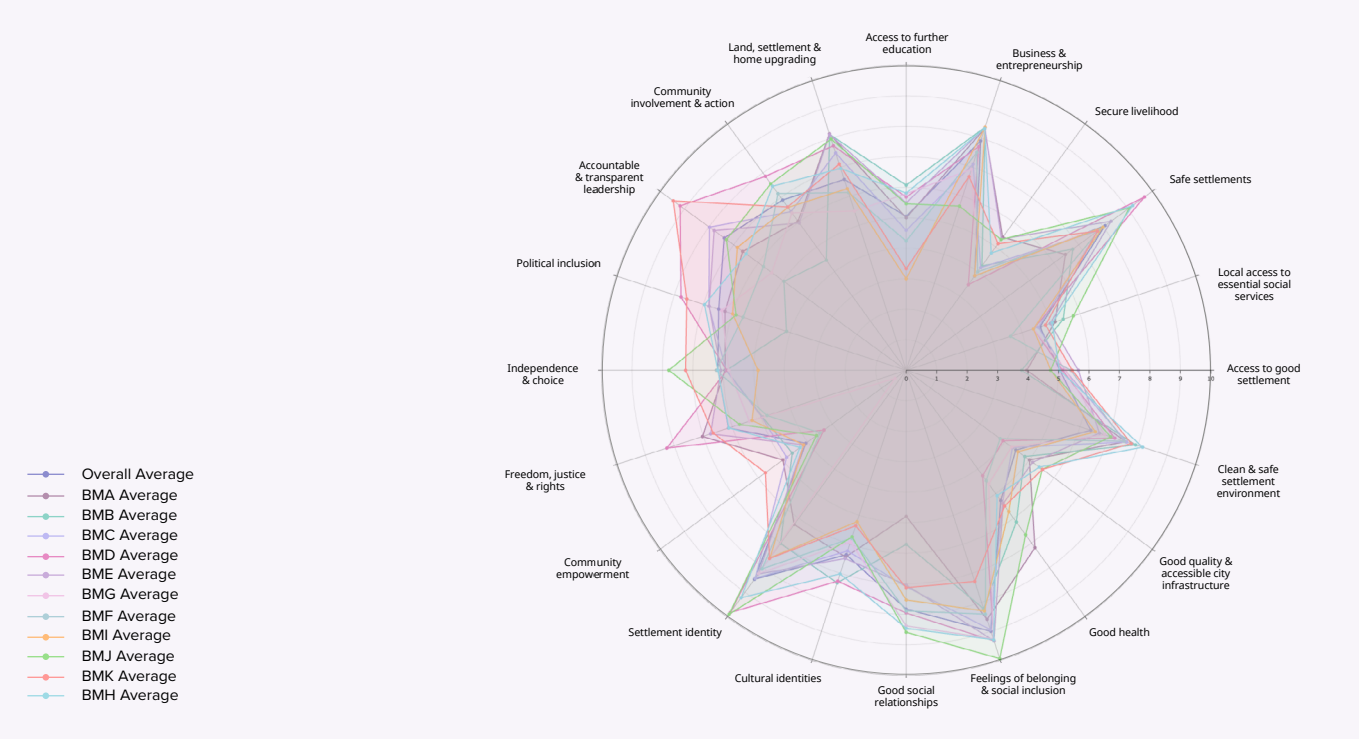


Figure 7. Bonde La Mpunga Maisha Bora Index Subdomain Scores



### 3.1 Cross-cutting trends: challenges and successes

#### Challenges

Livelihood security presents the most severe cross-cutting challenge, with notably low settlement scores (Bonde la Mpunga: 4.23, Keko Machungwa: 3.92, Mji Mpya: 2.67). This insecurity manifests through unstable income patterns, high informal employment rates, and significant gender disparities in economic participation. The dominance of self-employment (47.5%) contributes to income volatility, affecting households’ ability to plan and invest.

Settlement access and infrastructure present fundamental challenges, evidenced by the low average score of 5.04 in the Access to Good Settlement subdomain. This score reveals substantial disparities in residents’ access to essential settlement opportunities and services. The variations between settlements highlight systemic inequalities, with some areas showing access scores as low as 3.79, particularly affecting economically vulnerable households. These access limitations compound other challenges, creating economic opportunities and social services barriers.

Basic needs access remains problematic across all settlements, with 25% experiencing food insecurity, 15% facing water scarcity, and 27% confronting electricity shortages. These challenges vary in severity by location, with Mji Mpya reporting the highest rates of insecurity regarding basic needs despite strong community cohesion scores. Seasonal variations in access compound these challenges, particularly affecting households with unstable incomes.

Infrastructure limitations manifest through poor quality housing and inadequate service delivery systems. Overall infrastructure scores average 4.45 across settlements, reflecting significant deficiencies in essential services. Housing quality concerns affect 38.2% of residents, whilst 48.47% express dissatisfaction with living space. Despite high homeownership rates (60.8%), infrastructure inadequacies persist, suggesting systemic challenges beyond individual capacity to address. These limitations correlate strongly with the settlement access disparities, creating compounded disadvantages for certain demographic groups.

#### Successes

High scores for belonging in all settlements indicate remarkably strong social cohesion that transcends economic disparities, reflecting deep community integration and social bonds (Mji Mpya achieving 9.37, Keko Machungwa 8.89, and Bonde la Mpunga 8.81).

Settlement identity emerges as a key strength, averaging above 8.0 across locations. This consistent performance suggests residents maintain strong connections to place and community despite infrastructure and economic challenges. Keko Machungwa residents demonstrate particularly robust community identification despite infrastructure limitations, while Mji Mpya’s young population shows exceptional community pride despite economic hardships.

Community cohesion metrics reveal resilient social networks that operate independently of economic status. Female residents particularly drive these high scores through active community engagement and informal support systems. The metrics display consistent strength across age groups and income levels, indicating sustainable social structures that function as critical support mechanisms. These social foundations enable communities to navigate challenges in basic services and economic security through collective action and mutual support, creating crucial resilience mechanisms in the face of material hardship.

This pattern of high social cohesion scores across demographically diverse settlements suggests an inherent strength in unplanned settlement social infrastructure. The consistency of these scores, despite varying economic conditions, indicates that social bonds may develop partly as a response to shared challenges, creating robust support systems that transcend individual prosperity indicators.

### 3.2 Demographic analysis

#### Employment and economic Security

Employment status is a primary predictor of prosperity scores in Dar es Salaam’s unplanned settlements. Formal and secure employment consistently correlates with higher prosperity indicators across all income brackets, underscoring the importance of job security over earnings alone. Youth unemployment stands at 25.5%, indicating significant barriers for younger residents. The employment landscape’s concentration in the service sector further exacerbates these challenges.

Figures 8 and 9 reveal compelling patterns in gender-based economic disparities across the settlements. As shown in Figure 5, men have a significantly higher employment rate (46.2%) than women (30.5%), while women are more than three times as likely to be economically inactive (27.6% vs. men’s 8.4%), reflecting traditional gender roles and care responsibilities.

Figure 9 extends this analysis by illustrating how these employment differences translate into income disparities. Men are more represented in higher income brackets, with notably stronger presence in formal employment-based incomes. Women’s income distribution shows greater concentration in lower brackets, with a higher proportion deriving income from informal and self-employment sources. This combined pattern of employment and income inequality contributes directly to gendered differences in prosperity outcomes, particularly in domains related to economic security and opportunities. Despite these economic disadvantages, women exhibit stronger performance in social cohesion metrics, suggesting resilient community networks that serve as alternative resources.

Figure 8. Employment status by gender

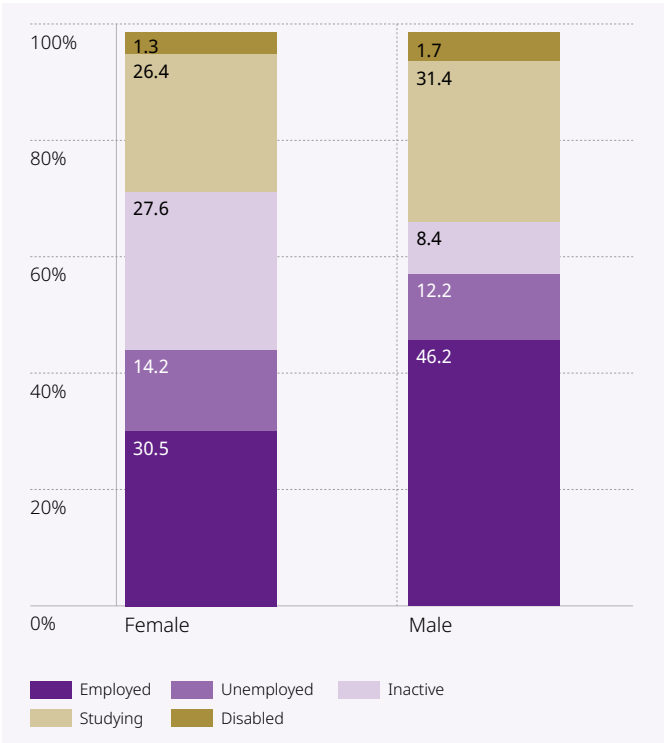


Figure 9. Income distribution by gender

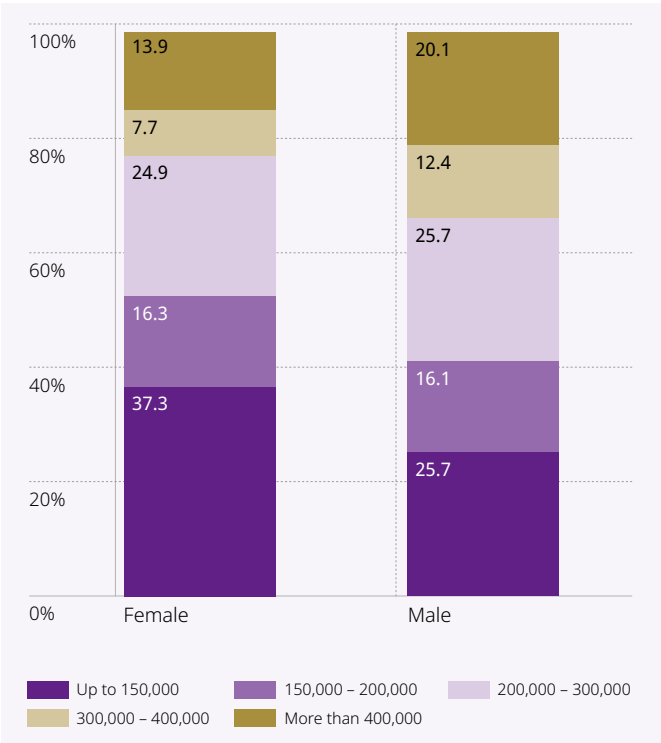


Figure 10 illustrates the composition of income sources across the three settlements, revealing significant variations in how residents generate their livelihoods. While self-employment dominates across all locations, its prevalence is notably higher in Mji Mpya (55.4%) compared to Bonde la Mpunga (44.4%) and Keko Machungwa (42.2%). Business profits constitute a substantial income source in both Mji Mpya (26.9%) and Keko Machungwa (26.8%), but are less significant in Bonde la Mpunga (15.4%). Conversely, labour income (formal employment) is more prominent in Bonde la Mpunga (26.1%) than in the other settlements, reflecting its relatively stronger formal employment base. Perhaps most striking is the variation in dependence on aid and help, which reaches 22.2% in Keko Machungwa, nearly double the rates in the other settlements. These distinct income composition patterns help explain each community’s different prosperity challenges, with Mji Mpya’s heavy reliance on precarious self-employment contributing to its low livelihood security score despite high employment rates.

Social & Demographic Factors

Age significantly influences prosperity. Older individuals typically exhibit elevated scores in belonging and social inclusion while sustaining more stable incomes. In contrast, the significant youth demographic, especially in Mji Mpya (67% under 35), encounters difficulties regarding economic stability and access to infrastructure.

Figure 11 reveals compelling patterns in community engagement across gender, age, and settlement location. Women consistently demonstrate higher engagement scores than men across all three settlements, with the gender gap most pronounced in Keko Machungwa where female-driven community networks appear particularly robust. This gender difference represents a key structural pattern in how social capital forms within these communities.

Age also influences engagement levels, with older residents showing higher participation rates than younger community members, likely reflecting accumulated social connections and greater investment in community structures. When comparing settlements, Mji Mpya displays the highest overall engagement scores despite facing the most severe economic challenges. This reinforces our finding that strong social cohesion can develop as a response to material hardship. These patterns demonstrate how social capital in unplanned settlements operates through distinct demographic channels, with women and older residents serving as crucial pillars of community cohesion. This finding highlights the importance of recognising these demographic differences when designing prosperity interventions that build upon community strengths.

Every settlement displays unique demographic-prosperity correlations. The survey results suggest that residents of Bonde la Mpunga exhibit enhanced economic performance yet diminished community cohesion. On the other hand, households of Keko Machungwa exhibit a contrasting trend: strong social networks despite economic difficulties. The younger demographic of Mji Mpya is associated with distinct challenges regarding prosperity, especially in accessing services.

These demographic factors converge to form unique prosperity profiles. Older women demonstrate significant community integration despite restricted economic involvement. Settlement characteristics either exacerbate or alleviate these demographic effects, resulting in distinct patterns of advantage and challenge in each location.

Figure 10. Income composition by location

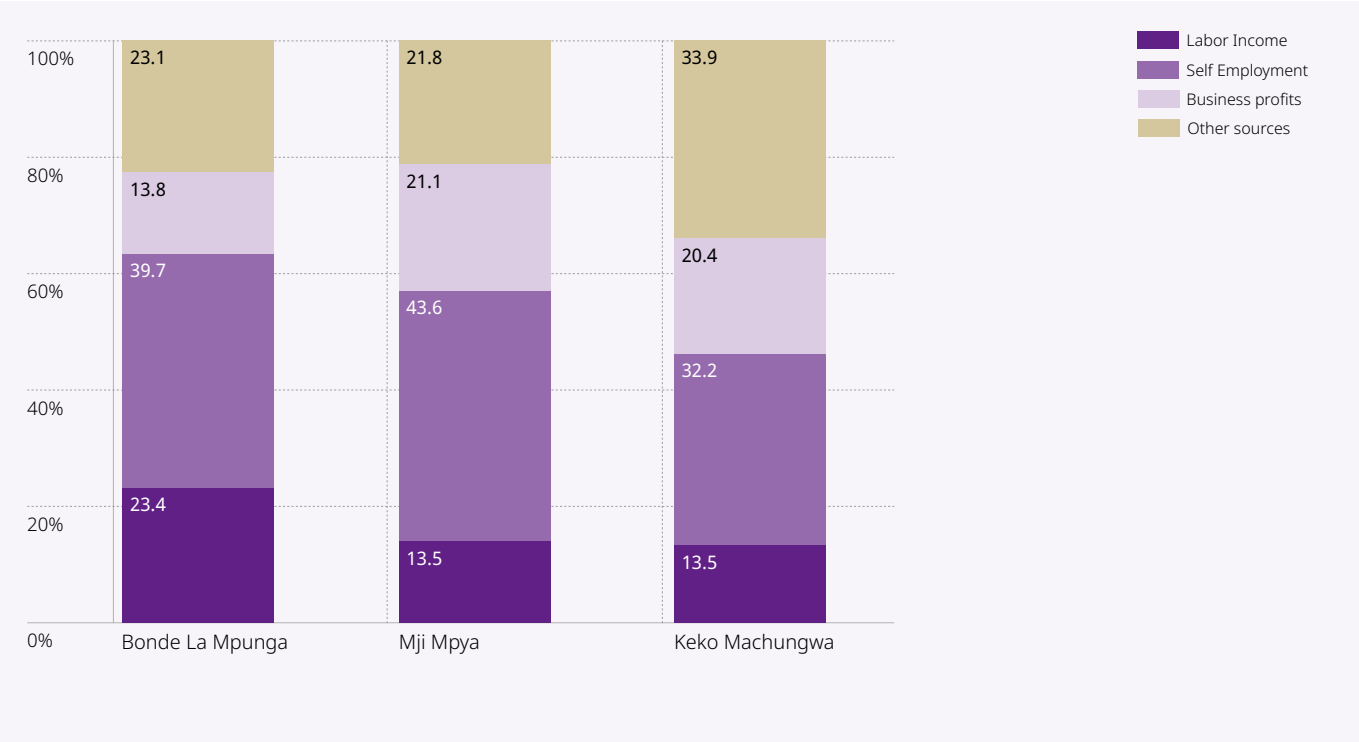
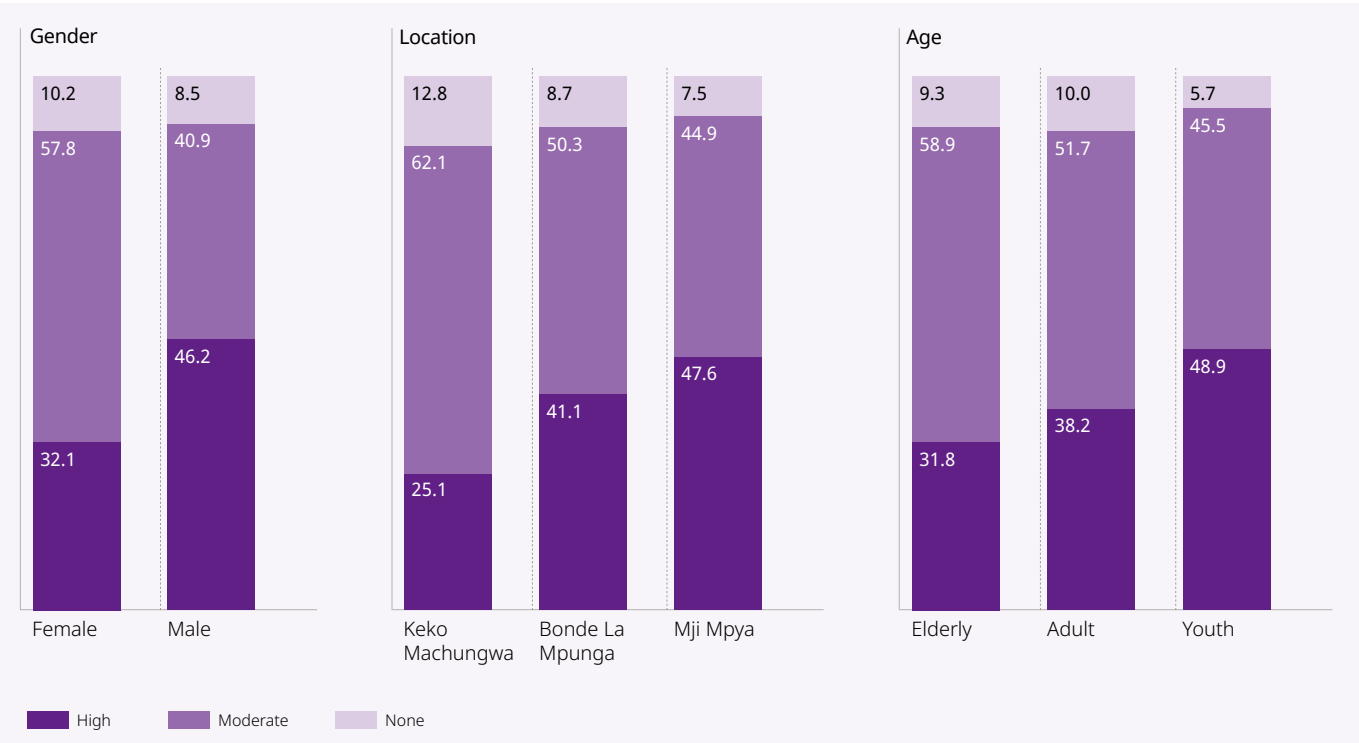


Figure 11. Community engagement scores by gender, research site and age





3.3 Prosperity and place

The three settlements exhibit distinct patterns of prosperity influenced by their unique demographic and economic characteristics. The interaction among income security, community cohesion, and fundamental needs entails intricate trade-offs across locations.

Bonde la Mpunga illustrates that economic advantages may not result in widespread prosperity. Although 50% of residents receive a monthly income, suggesting financial stability, the community exhibits weaker social cohesion. The educational spectrum comprises 46% in primary education and 8.8% in tertiary qualifications, indicating social inequality. The prevalence of service sector employment (91.48%) fosters systemic vulnerabilities, as economic disruptions within this sector might adversely affect the entire community. This economic concentration, while ensuring stability through consistent income, signifies a significant vulnerability in long-term resilience of prosperity.

Keko Machungwa demonstrates strong social capital formation, evident in its robust community networks. Notably, the settlement also reports high water security, with 92% of residents having dependable access. While these factors may not be directly correlated, both contribute to the community’s overall prosperity. The demographic composition, comprising 57% female residents and a median age of 32, promotes effective community organisation despite relatively low employment rates (38.2%). This pattern suggests that demographic factors may be equally significant as economic indicators in fostering community resilience. The settlement’s robust social networks mitigate economic difficulties, establishing alternative support systems.

Mji Mpya exemplifies a critical prosperity paradox that challenges conventional economic indicators. Despite having the lowest unemployment rate (11.8%) among the three settlements, Mji Mpya registers the poorest livelihood security score (2.67). This apparent contradiction reveals the limitations of using employment status alone as an indicator of economic wellbeing. While employment rates are high, the nature of this employment is predominantly informal and precarious. With 55.4% of residents relying on self-employment as their primary income source, many workers experience income volatility, lack of social protection, and limited job security despite being classified as ‘employed.’ This vulnerability is compounded by larger households (five members on average) and a predominantly youthful population (67% under 35), which creates higher dependency ratios and greater economic pressure on working household members.

The settlement’s high belonging scores (9.37) coexist with these livelihood challenges, suggesting that robust community ties serve as a crucial coping mechanism but cannot fully compensate for economic insecurity. The Mji Mpya case illustrates how conventional economic indicators can mask significant challenges, particularly in rapidly growing settlements with young populations.

These patterns demonstrate how prosperity arises from the intricate interaction of demographics, economic factors, and community dynamics. Each settlement exhibits distinct configurations of these elements, indicating that prosperity interventions should be carefully customised to local contexts instead of standardised solutions. This underscores the need for nuanced, multidimensional prosperity measures that capture both the quality of economic participation and its adequacy in supporting sustainable livelihoods.

Insights and recommendations

The Maisha Bora Index demonstrates how the interplay between economic security, social cohesion, access to basic services, and community power shapes prosperity in unplanned settlements in Dar es Salaam. While each settlement – Bonde la Mpunga, Keko Machungwa, and Mji Mpya – faces distinctive pressures, all experience livelihood insecurity and infrastructure deficits. Nevertheless, their strong social ties and commitment to mutual support demonstrate how residents often meet adversity with remarkable resilience. By placing local priorities at the heart of the research and co-producing evidence with communities, the Maisha Bora Index moves beyond narrow, income-based measures of urban prosperity, and empowers residents to advocate for change and lead settlement interventions.

CCI and IGP are supporting a team of citizen scientists, community leaders, residents, municipal officials, utilities organisations, local entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurs from Fast Forward 2030 Africa to pilot community-led interventions in Mji Mpya. The pilots focus on three priority areas highlighted by the Maisha Bora Index and selected by the community for action: infrastructure, focused on drainage and solid waste management; social services focused on safe water and affordable health insurance; and clean cooking energy.

The Maisha Bora Index provides:

- **Grounded, place-specific insights to inform future policies and programmes in Dar es Salaam:**
  - Identifying where programmes that build on strong social networks to strengthen women’s leadership and youth engagement, can help to channel collective action towards improved livelihoods and services.
  - Water, electricity, and waste management systems are unevenly distributed. Targeted, context-specific improvements—developed with local residents—can provide localised infrastructure, address immediate deficits, and tackle livelihood insecurity through sustainable, community-based enterprise.
  - Targeted support for local entrepreneurship and skills development, especially for young people, can support community-based enterprise and help households achieve greater economic stability.
- **A tested model to embed citizen-led metrics and empower residents** that can be adopted in other urban settlements and adapted for use in peri-urban and rural areas. Echoing the call to action in the policy briefing prepared for national government, regional and municipal authorities, published alongside this report, the Maisha Bora Index is a new kind of tool for communities and officials to track social, economic, and environmental conditions in settlements at the region, city, ward and neighbourhood levels. The expertise of local communities is crucial.



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# Appendix A

Figure A1. Maisha Bora Index Indicators Table

1. Foundations of Prosperity (Mambo ya msingi)	
Subdomain	Indicators
Local access to essential social services for all	Childcare
	Healthcare
	Basic education
	Transport
	Dispensary & affordable medicine
Access to good settlement infrastructure for all	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
Secure livelihood	Decent & secure income
	Security of residency
	Ability to satisfy basic needs
	Lack of disease

Figure A1. Continues onto next page

Figure A1. Maisha Bora Index Indicators Table

2. Opportunities & Aspiration (Fursa na matamano)	
Subdomain	Indicators
Business & entrepreneurship	Enterprise training
	Local access to markets
	Access to capital (micro-credit loans)
	Community capacity to develop enterprises by and for the settlement
Access to further education	Further & vocational education
	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
	Community enterprises by and for the settlement
	Information, consultation & mobilisation on decisions affecting the settlement
	Collaborative dialogue with development stakeholders
3. Health & Healthy Neighbourhoods (Afya bora mazingirasafi na salama)	
Subdomain	Indicators
Clean, healthy & safe settlement environment	Clean air & unpolluted environment
	Safe roads & paths in settlement
	Mitigating disaster risk
	Accessible play & public 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 for all	Access to health insurance
	Good physical & mental health
	Able to access health services
	Maternal & child health
	Access to health education on hygiene, nutrition & pregnancy

Figure A1. Maisha Bora Index Indicators Table

4. Belonging, Identities & Culture (Mahusiano/ Imani/ Mila na desturi)	
Subdomain	Indicators
Settlement identity & reputation	
Cultural identities & religious practices	Respect for place of worship
	Harmonious social & cultural practices
Good social relationships in the community	Good family relationship
	Social networks to call on in an emergency
	Supportive social relationships/ interactions in settlement
Feelings of belonging & inclusion	Feeling of belonging
	Feeling respected
	Information, consultation, & mobilisation on decisions affecting the settlement
5. Power, Voice & Influence (Uo sauti/ Ngubu ya ushawishi na uongozi bora)	
Subdomain	Indicators
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	Community action
	Skills & capacities for knowledge production and action

# Appendix B

Figure B1. Maisha Bora Index Scores

Neighbourhood	Access to good Settlement	Local Access to essential social services	Safe Settlements	Secure Livelihood	Business & Entrepreneurship
BMA	3.959	5.141	6.458	5.392	8.330
BMB	3.790	5.417	6.763	4.232	8.383
BMC	5.211	4.558	7.793	4.165	7.115
BMD	5.127	4.396	9.673	3.465	7.712
BME	5.645	4.974	8.306	5.318	8.355
BMF	5.395	3.604	7.868	3.987	7.508
BMG	5.243	4.398	7.981	4.003	6.928
BMI	4.750	4.387	7.975	3.832	8.377
BMJ	4.741	5.770	9.046	5.299	5.656
BMK	5.450	4.810	7.763	5.130	6.678
BMH	5.031	5.036	9.195	4.753	8.336
MMA	4.524	4.162	8.044	2.513	7.477
MMB	4.491	4.158	7.713	2.954	8.045
MMC	5.413	4.611	8.448	3.086	7.790
MMD	4.755	4.087	8.041	2.696	8.213
MME	5.161	4.459	8.451	1.826	8.240
MMF	5.550	3.866	7.837	2.722	8.525
MMG	5.573	4.516	7.330	2.896	8.941
KMD	5.217	4.992	8.729	4.032	7.738
KME	4.430	3.913	8.344	3.391	8.107
KMF	4.979	5.078	9.398	3.008	9.337
KMG	4.926	4.686	7.470	3.808	8.278
KMI	6.478	5.315	7.021	5.365	7.953

Figure B1. Maisha Bora Index Scores

Neighbourhood	Access to further education	Land, Settlement & home upgrading	Community Involvement & Action	Accountable	Political Inclusion
BMA	5.000	8.151	6.042	6.629	6.250
BMB	6.071	8.130	4.455	4.964	4.135
BMC	4.595	7.493	6.427	7.980	6.809
BMD	5.682	7.738	7.857	9.173	7.768
BME	5.493	8.134	5.974	7.791	6.802
BMF	4.242	6.134	7.162	5.790	5.631
BMG	5.787	5.491	6.380	5.454	6.364
BMI	2.996	6.264	6.601	6.848	5.990
BMJ	5.464	7.971	7.562	7.290	5.874
BMK	3.333	7.110	6.623	9.447	7.566
BMH	5.808	6.956	7.455	6.490	6.963
MMA	4.499	5.702	6.975	8.372	5.685
MMB	4.470	5.787	6.642	7.138	6.396
MMC	4.226	5.132	7.499	7.301	6.201
MMD	4.965	5.797	7.012	7.132	6.442
MME	6.792	6.764	8.267	6.546	6.535
MMF	5.407	4.959	7.671	7.412	6.284
MMG	5.861	5.420	7.077	7.540	5.877
KMD	5.485	6.621	7.129	8.639	7.265
KME	4.589	5.928	7.485	8.548	7.034
KMF	1.042	6.087	8.370	6.075	7.555
KMG	6.754	6.362	6.145	7.321	4.691
KMI	7.500	7.137	5.917	9.880	8.625

Figure B1. Continues onto next page

Figure B1. Maisha Bora Index Scores

Neighbourhood	Independence & Choice	Freedom, Justice & Rights	Community Empowerment	Settlement Identity	Cultural identities
BMA	5.938	7.031	5.000	6.250	6.438
BMB	5.897	4.959	4.615	7.019	7.327
BMC	5.913	4.983	4.848	8.431	6.227
BMD	5.893	8.259	3.333	9.821	7.268
BME	6.082	6.749	4.156	8.263	6.494
BMF	6.227	4.798	3.491	8.052	5.786
BMG	5.821	5.410	0.452	8.237	5.917
BMI	4.863	5.325	4.157	7.601	5.217
BMJ	7.792	5.748	3.636	9.893	5.744
BMK	7.237	6.656	5.714	7.632	5.355
BMH	6.181	6.122	4.310	9.220	7.017
MMA	6.886	6.292	6.027	8.950	6.000
MMB	5.240	5.483	3.769	8.020	7.218
MMC	6.368	7.225	4.205	8.983	6.219
MMD	5.879	5.644	3.421	7.851	7.232
MME	7.270	6.864	0.786	9.863	8.100
MMF	5.428	5.019	2.192	9.349	6.640
MMG	5.586	5.741	2.233	8.642	6.687
KMD	7.629	6.439	7.486	9.579	5.929
KME	6.894	6.585	5.876	8.934	6.590
KMF	5.050	7.662	1.611	9.574	7.081
KMG	5.806	5.371	3.407	7.830	5.171
KMI	6.146	6.595	8.756	6.875	4.625

Figure B1. Maisha Bora Index Scores

Neighbourhood	Good social relationships	Feelings of belonging & social inclusion	Good health	Good quality & accessible city infrastructure	Clean, healthy & safe settlement environment
BMA	4.786	8.594	7.186	5.000	7.583
BMB	5.709	8.221	6.147	4.808	7.920
BMC	7.097	8.936	5.378	4.309	7.608
BMD	7.959	9.330	4.272	3.929	7.199
BME	7.037	9.326	5.414	5.130	6.675
BMF	7.893	8.412	4.467	3.808	7.527
BMG	8.377	9.255	4.607	4.279	6.853
BMI	7.527	8.303	5.730	4.541	6.528
BMJ	8.588	9.940	6.670	5.521	7.055
BMK	7.128	7.281	5.503	5.526	7.772
BMH	8.463	9.288	5.080	5.396	8.164
MMA	8.174	9.393	5.215	3.690	5.140
MMB	8.250	8.645	4.748	4.427	4.523
MMC	8.083	9.475	4.615	4.061	6.480
MMD	8.018	9.117	5.006	4.123	4.830
MME	9.271	9.905	4.567	4.015	3.842
MMF	9.263	9.889	4.627	3.801	3.520
MMG	8.605	9.152	5.334	4.344	3.724
KMD	8.532	9.803	5.969	4.406	6.601
KME	8.154	9.309	4.681	3.907	6.682
KMF	8.499	9.602	3.937	4.274	7.710
KMG	7.180	8.600	6.537	4.615	5.973
KMI	7.439	7.156	5.835	4.375	6.571



# Appendix C: Settlement Profiles

## Bonde la Mpunga

Bonde la Mpunga, situated in the Msasani ward of Kinondoni Municipal Council, has a population of 22,230 residents. The population is primarily female (52%) with a mean age of 33 years and an average household size of four individuals. Households led by males constitute 74.37% of the community.

Figure C1 illustrates the age distribution in Bonde la Mpunga. The settlement displays a relatively young demographic profile typical of urban areas in Tanzania, with a higher proportion of working-age adults (20-50 years) and fewer elderly residents. This age structure reflects broader demographic patterns in East African urban settlements, where economic opportunities attract younger populations seeking employment.

Educational attainment in Bonde la Mpunga (Figure C2) shows that around 64% of residents have no formal education or have completed only primary school, while 26.8% have completed secondary school. A smaller proportion (8.8%) have achieved higher education, suggesting that, although basic education is relatively common, there remain significant barriers to accessing tertiary education. This distribution may influence residents’ access to skilled employment and broader economic opportunities.

Employment statistics in Bonde la Mpunga (Figure C3) show that nearly half of residents (49.3%) are employed, while 19.6% are unemployed and 31.0% are economically inactive. Among those employed, 91.48% work in the service sector, underscoring the settlement’s strong reliance on a single industry and highlighting a lack of economic diversification. Concentrating in one sector may increase vulnerability to economic shocks and limit alternative livelihood opportunities.

Self-employment (44.4%) is the predominant income source for residents of Bonde la Mpunga (Figure C4), followed by labour income (26.1%) and business profits (15.4%). This pattern reflects a local economy largely reliant on informal work and small-scale enterprises. Meanwhile, 11.8% of households depend on aid or help, indicating a notable level of economic vulnerability. In addition, the relatively low reliance on savings, pensions, and credit underscores limited access to formal financial services and restricted capacity for long-term financial planning.

Figure C1. Age distribution in Bonde la Mpunga

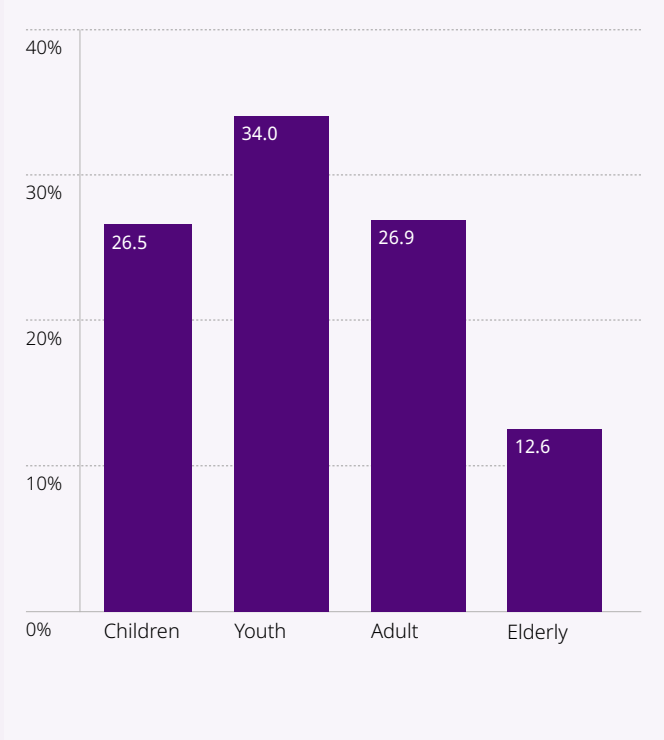


Figure C2. Education status in Bonde la Mpunga

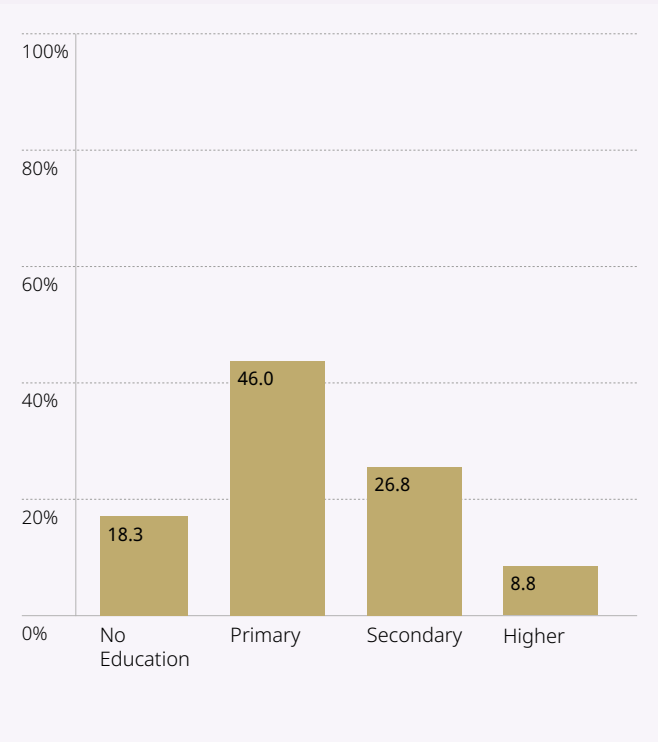


Figure C3. Employment status in Bonde la Mpunga

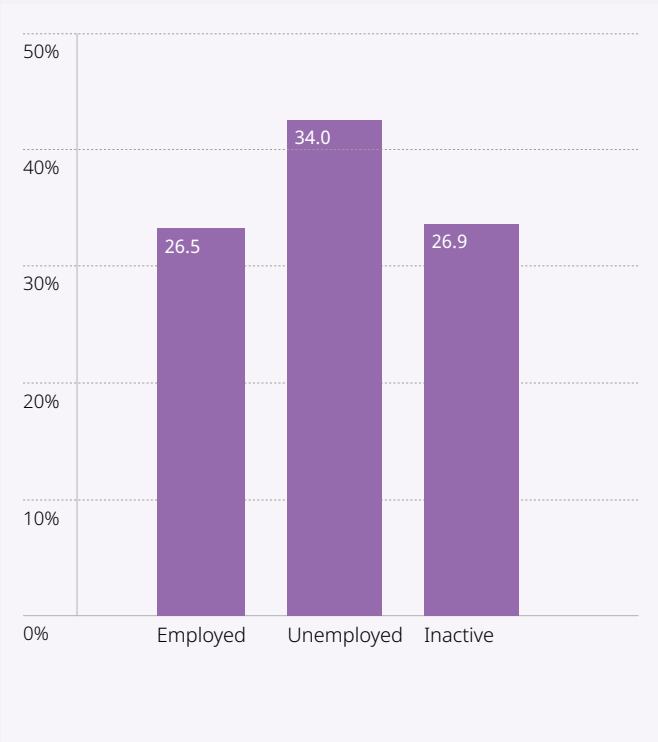
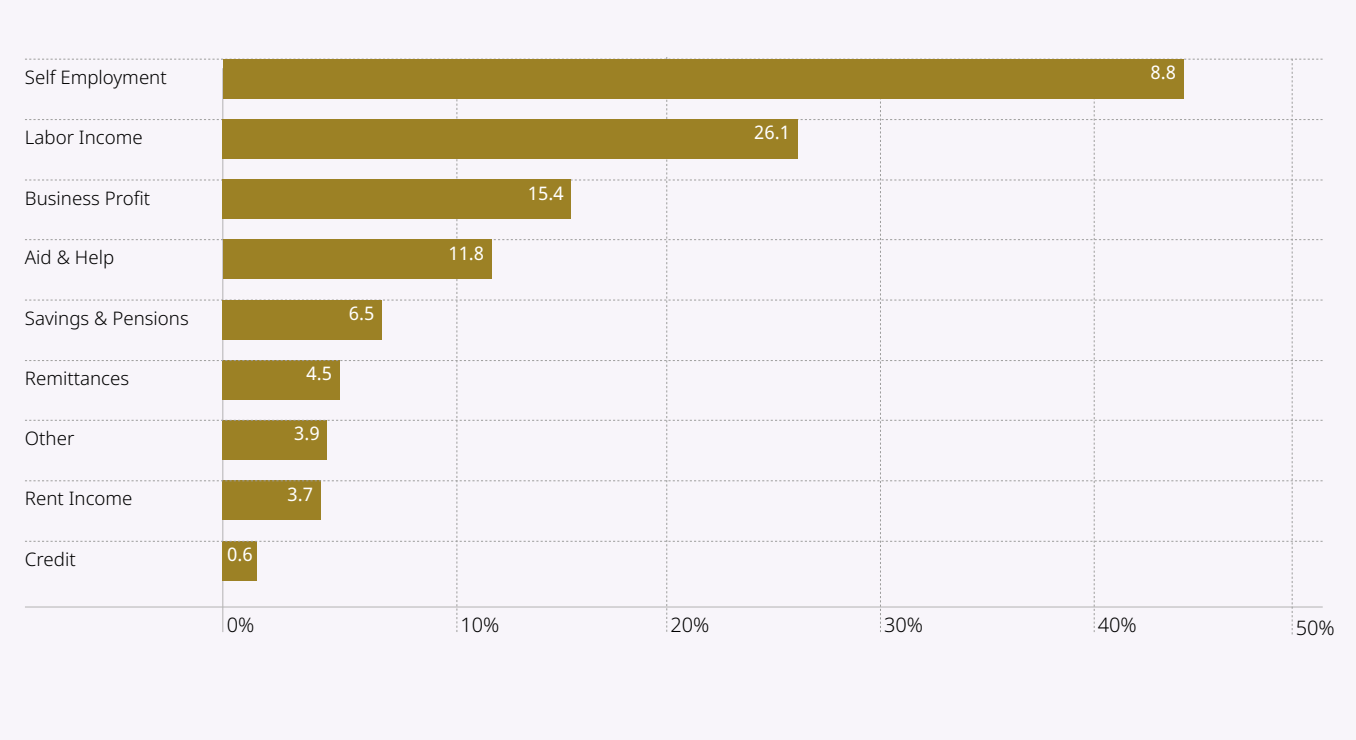


Figure C4. Sources of income among Bonde la Mpunga residents



Keko Machungwa

Keko Machungwa, located in the Miburani ward under Temeke Municipal Council, is home to approximately 12,449 residents from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. A majority of the population (57%) is female, and households typically comprise four members, with 68% led by men. The average age in the settlement is 32 years, reflecting a predominantly young demographic.

As shown in Figure C5, children (27.0%) and youth (33.2%) together make up 60.2% of the population, while adults account for 30.6% and the elderly represent 9.3%. This youthful profile suggests both opportunities and challenges for the community—particularly in areas such as education, employment, and social services.

Employment data for Keko Machungwa (Figure C7) indicates that 46.8% of residents are employed, 22.6% are unemployed, and 30.6% are economically inactive. Of those employed, the service sector accounts for 91% of jobs. Notably, youth and adults comprise 58% of the workforce, reflecting the settlement’s relatively young demographic profile.

In Keko Machungwa, self-employment (42.2%) is the primary source of income, followed by business profits (26.8%) and aid or help (22.2%). This indicates a substantial reliance on informal and self-driven activities and external support. Labour income accounts for just 17.7% of household earnings, while savings and pensions make up only 8.0%, reflecting limited access to formal employment and long-term financial security.

Figure C5. Age distribution in Keko Machungwa

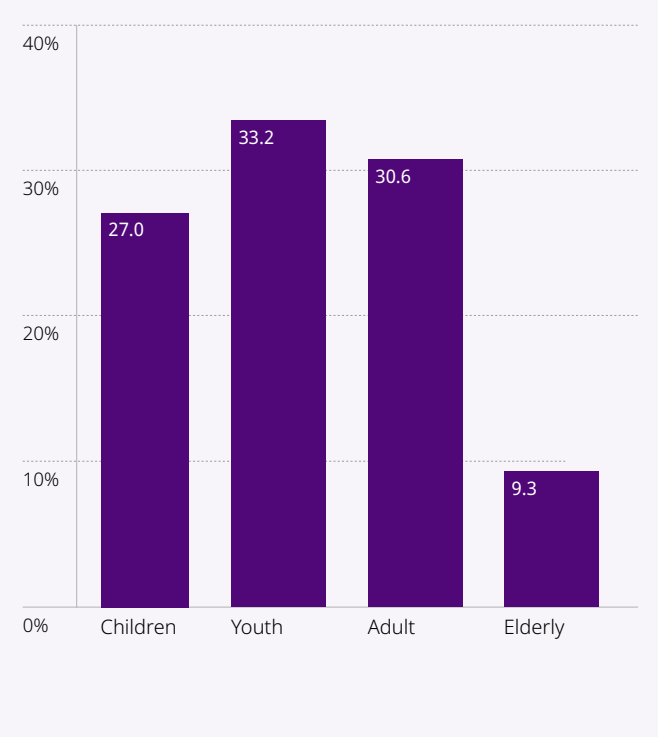


Figure C6. Education status in Keko Machungwa

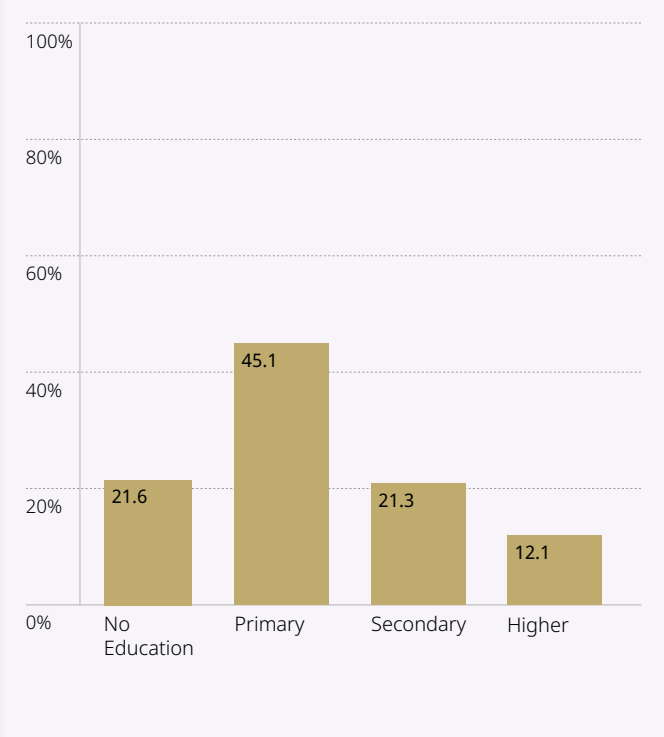


Figure C7. Employment status in Keko Machungwa

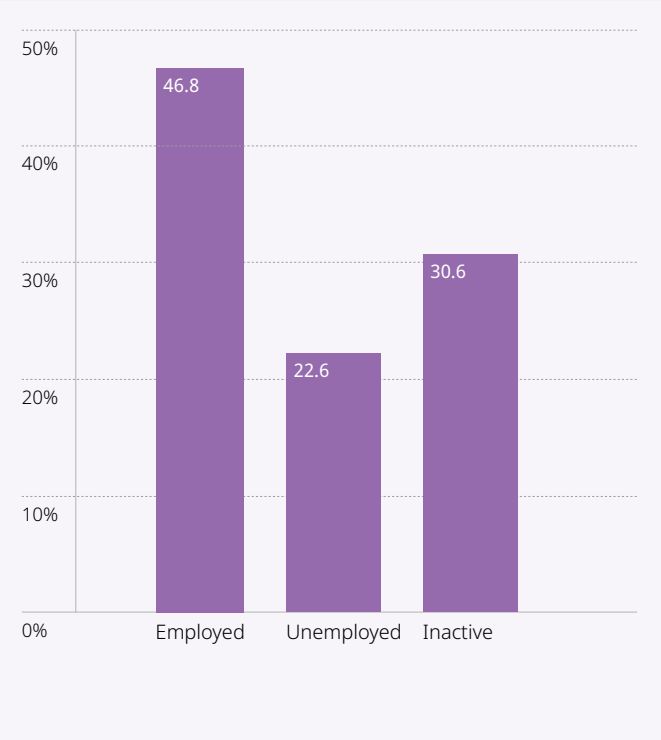
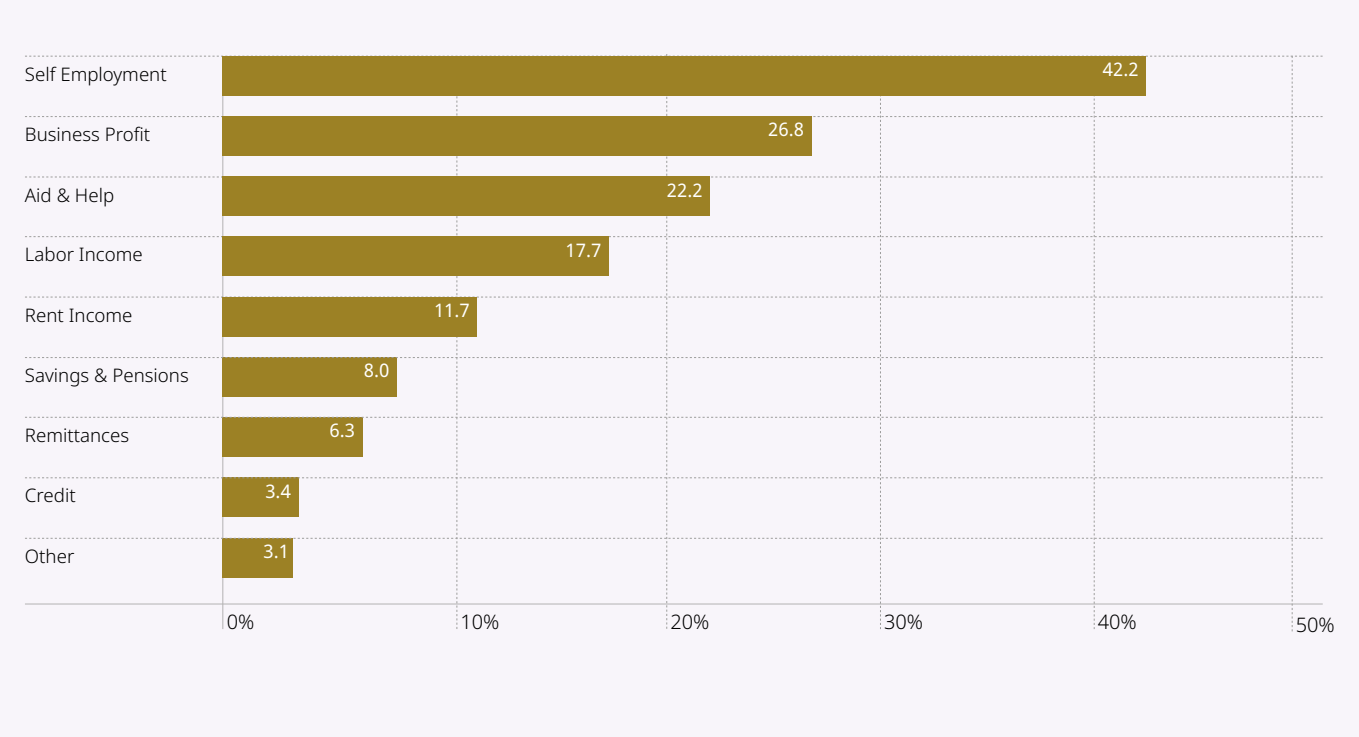


Figure C8. Sources of income among Keko Machungwa residents



Mji Mpya

Mji Mpya, located in the Mnyamani ward of the Ilala district, has an estimated population of 17,000, split almost evenly by gender (50.32% male, 49.68% female). Households are relatively large, averaging five members, and men head 77%.

As illustrated in Figure C9, the settlement has a predominantly young demographic: children (34.1%) and youth (32.9%) together account for 67% of the population, highlighting both the potential and the challenges associated with a rapidly growing youth cohort.

Educational attainment in Mji Mpya spans from no formal education to higher education; however, a significant majority does not progress beyond the primary level. As shown in Figure C10, 23.6% have no formal education, 55.2% have completed only primary school, 18.6% have completed secondary school, and just 2.7% have attained higher education. This distribution highlights notable barriers to advanced education and may limit residents’ long-term employment prospects.

Employment data for Mji Mpya (Figure C11) indicates that 55% of residents are employed, 11.8% are unemployed, and 33.2% are economically inactive. This makes Mji Mpya’s unemployment rate the lowest among the three settlements. However, a substantial proportion of residents is not in the labour force—likely reflecting the area’s large youth population, many of whom may still be in education or training.

In Mji Mpya, self-employment constitutes the largest share of income sources (55.4%), reflecting a substantial reliance on informal work (Figure C12). Business profits (26.9%) and labour income (17.2%) further emphasise the community’s dependence on self-directed economic activities. Aid and help, at 16.1%, points to the settlement’s economic vulnerability, while the relatively low reliance on savings and pensions (8.6%) and minimal use of credit (2.2%) suggest limited access to formal financial services and long-term financial planning mechanisms.

Figure C9. Age distribution in Mji Mpya

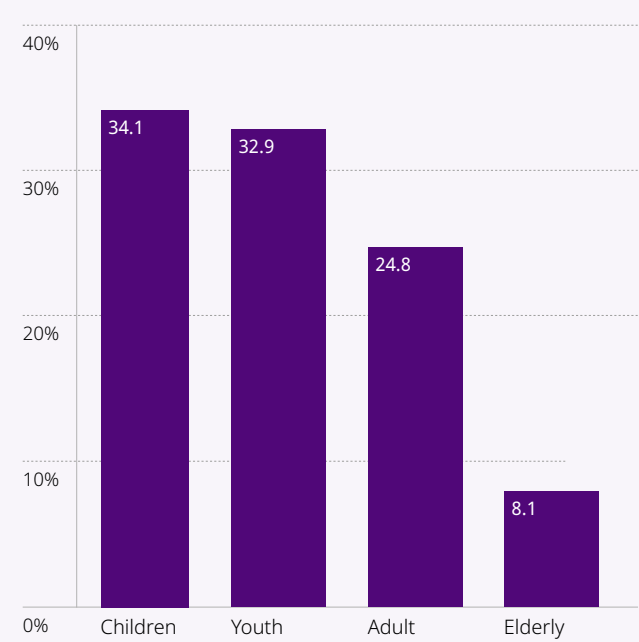


Figure C10. Education status in Mji Mpya

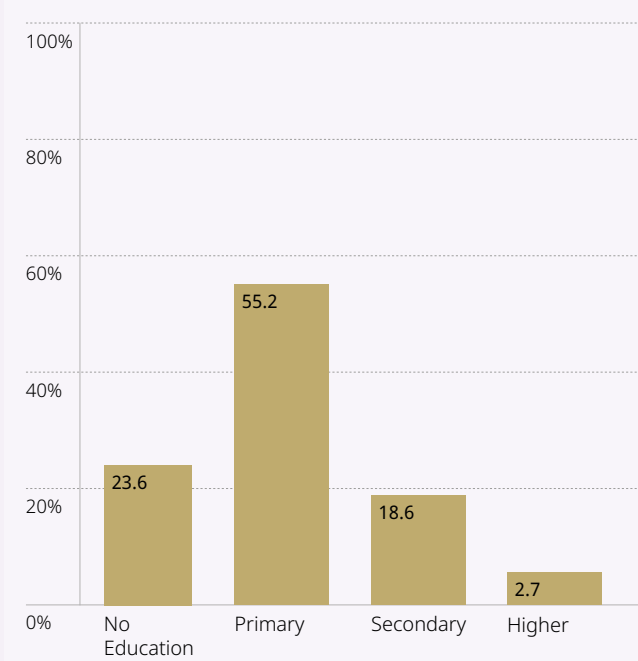


Figure C11. Employment status in Mji Mpya

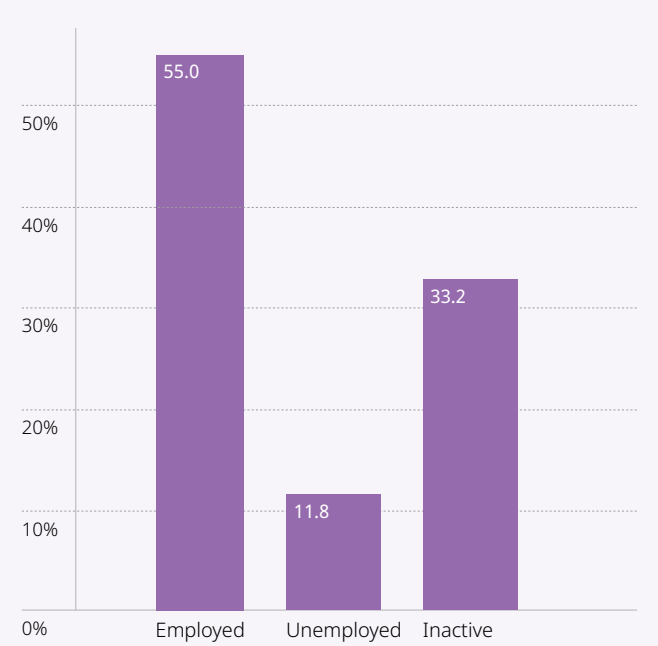
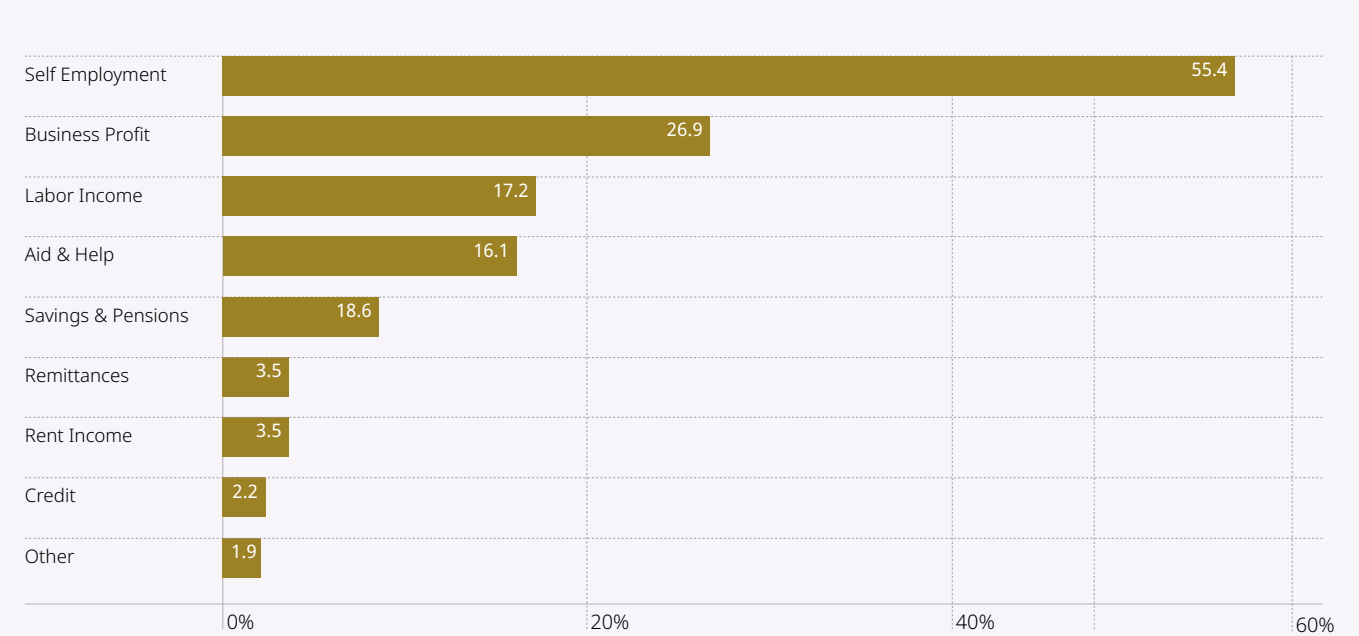


Figure C12. Sources of income among Mji Mpya residents



# Appendix D: Maisha Bora Index Summary Methodology

## Data Collection Process

In 2019, the preliminary stage of the research involved conducting qualitative interviews and focus groups with residents of unplanned settlements to determine the factors that facilitate or impede prosperous living. The research team and community members collaboratively analysed the findings and co-designed the ‘Maisha Bora Model’ to visualise the priorities expressed by research participants. Subsequently, CCI and citizen scientists organised community feedback workshops to share the research findings and invite feedback from the wider community.

The research progressed to convert the ‘Maisha Bora Model’ into new indicators of prosperity and an innovative household survey instrument that evaluates prosperity within unplanned settlements in Dar es Salaam. CCI undertook the comprehensive task of translating the survey questions into Swahili. The questionnaire was then encoded into KOBO Collect, a free and open-source mobile data-gathering tool that facilitated efficient data collection.

In 2021, a cross-sectional dataset was gathered from Mji Mpya, Bonda la Mpunga, and Keko Machungwa, comprising a non-random sample of 1,081 households. The study employed a household survey methodology conducted through face-to-face interviews using structured questionnaires administered by trained citizen scientists from the local communities.

## Design and Testing of the Household Survey Questionnaire

IGP and CCI invested considerable effort in training a diverse team of citizen scientists to collect the survey data. This team included community members from the three settlements under study, members of the Tanzania Urban Poor Federation, and leaders from different tiers of local government including wards, sub-wards, and cell units commonly referred to as ‘wajumbe’.

The citizen science team underwent comprehensive training on several critical aspects of survey methodology, including question interpretation, accurate translation, survey sampling strategies, questionnaire administration, and familiarisation with KOBO Collect. Participants also received thorough instruction on research ethics and techniques for managing various survey-related challenges that might arise during fieldwork. All citizen scientists received appropriate compensation for their contributions to the data collection process.

To ensure methodological rigour, the citizen science research team implemented a survey questionnaire test in each designated study area. The primary objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of the survey questions and identify any potential issues before full-scale implementation. This testing procedure spanned over one week in February and yielded significant insights that led to important refinements to the questionnaire before formal data gathering.

The study employed a non-randomised sampling approach for household surveys in all three settlements. The absence of access barriers during the fieldwork was attributed mainly to the citizen scientists’ intimate familiarity with the area. The participation of local government officials proved integral in all phases of data collection, as they provided both necessary authorisations and valuable support in identifying appropriate households for inclusion in the sample.

## Presentation of Interim Research Findings to Community Stakeholders

In March 2022, researchers from IGP and CCI presented an interim analysis of the household survey data to provide feedback to multiple stakeholders, including community members from the three settlements. Two distinct workshops were conducted: one of a technical nature at Ardhi University specifically designed for university and government researchers, and another non-technical workshop that involved the participation of city and municipal leaders, ward leaders, community members, and representatives from various NGOs. These workshops facilitated the acquisition of critical feedback on the interim research results and enabled the incorporation of diverse stakeholder perspectives before producing additional data-driven outputs.

As part of capacity-building efforts, IGP provided specialised training in statistical analysis to three graduates employed by CCI. This comprehensive training program encompassed the utilisation of Stata software for rigorous data analysis. Subsequently, the CCI graduates independently analysed Maisha Bora’s data and collaborated on producing a valuable sequence of statistical bulletins and demographic profiles covering unplanned settlements in Dar es Salaam.

## Development of the ‘Maisha Bora Index ’

The final stage of the research entailed the development of the ‘Maisha Bora Index,’ designed to furnish insights into individuals’ subjective evaluation of their well-being and the determinants that facilitate or impede their capacity to lead a good life in the unplanned settlements.

IGP employed a z-score normalisation technique using the Maisha Bora Household survey data to estimate the prosperity levels across the three settlements. This analytical approach provided estimations for both the overall prosperity of the sites and the individual prosperity of each unplanned settlement.



## Variable Selection and Data Preparation

The variable selection process adhered to strict methodological criteria. Only variables with a clear ordinal ranking were included, meaning categorical variables with multiple levels but no inherent ‘order’ were excluded from the analysis. Furthermore, in cases where two variables contained redundant information, the more informative variable was selected. For example, questions with quantifiable answers were prioritised over simple ‘yes/no’ answers when the two variables represented similar constructs. Additionally, variables specific to certain subsamples, such as whether a household member is currently studying or the number of bathrooms within a household, were not included as they did not apply universally to all households.

All responses labelled as ‘refused,’ ‘don’t know,’ or ‘not applicable’ were systematically recoded as missing data, with missing data rates ranging from 0% to 40% across the various variables. To address this methodological challenge, we employed an imputation technique that matched the observed variable distributions to those from established sources such as Afrobarometer and World Bank datasets. To ensure consistency in interpretation, all variables were standardised so that higher scores uniformly indicate better outcomes; variables originally ordered from best to worst were negated to reverse the scale. The final index was constructed on a standardised scale ranging from 0 to 10 to facilitate interpretation and comparison.

## Z-Score Calculation and Index Construction

The procedure for index construction was adapted from the established methodology outlined in Woodcraft et al. (2025) to suit the specific context of Dar es Salaam. The technical procedure followed several sequential steps.

1. Calculate the means for each variable,  $X$ , in the Dar es Salaam dataset,  $\bar{x}_{Dar}$
2. Calculate the means for each variable at the building level. However, as most buildings have one household, this step involved the calculation of the mean at a household level,  $\bar{x}_{building}$
3. Calculation of the standard deviation of the variable for the mean calculated in Step 3 –  $SD(\bar{x}_{building})$
4. Normalise each selected variable as  $Z = \frac{X - \bar{x}_{Dar}}{SD(\bar{x}_{building})}$
5. Transform Z to a [0, 10] index as:  
$$I = 10 * \frac{Z - z_{min}}{(z_{max} - z_{min})} \text{ if } z_{min} \leq 0 \text{ or } I = 10 * \frac{z}{(z_{max} - z_{min})}$$

The Index was subsequently aggregated to the sub-domain level by averaging the Index values across all variables within each sub-domain. It is worth noting as a methodological consideration that the number of variables for which the mean is calculated at each household level varies by household due to differences in missing values across households, which is a common challenge in survey research of this nature.



#### Contact us

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