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When a child born this year celebrates their 18th birthday, they will most likely be living in an intermediary city, an agglomeration with a population between 50,000 and one million people that generally acts as a bridge between urban and rural areas.

Yet more than 64 percent of the urban population in Africa today live in informal settlements, with only 15 percent of urban dwellers able to buy houses.

"It will be a major battle to get a job, a home, and start a family. This is the urban future she [the child] will have if we do not change the urban agenda in Africa," said Maimunah Mohd Sharriff, executive director of the UN Habitat, during ninth edition of the Africities Summit held in Kisumu this past week.

Ms Sharriff believes that despite a strong push for major transformation in the intermediary cities, population growth continues to hurt city dwellers as rapid urbanisation has resulted in slums, inadequate social services, poor physical planning and zoning and social decadence.

In Kisumu, for instance, despite infrastructural development within the central business district, mushrooming informal settlements pose a major threat as big families are crammed into small spaces that lack access to basic amenities like roads, water, sanitation and healthcare.

Undeniably, cities and urban areas are the economic hubs that are home to businesses, industries and investors.

During the summit, there was a unanimous push to develop an African blueprint to guide growth in urban cities.

Others called for greater investment in family planning as more than 20 million women in Africa said they lack access to critical reproductive health services.

Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta said there should be more tangible, practical and

sustainable solutions to challenges facing urban areas.

He warned that as focus goes on unleashing the potential of the intermediary cities, the proponents must be aware of marginalising the growing population of rural people.

"This calls for proper planning to create smart cities that meet future urbanisation challenges, plans that address the emerging needs related to food security, shelter, environmental conservation health as well as infrastructure," said Mr Kenyatta.

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