

# Integrated Planning Action Group

Leveraging the Toolkit as a scalable approach to support faster, more integrated urban planning

Policy implications, international approaches & Belize pilot outcomes

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# 1 Executive Summary

## Executive Summary

This report presents an independent academic assessment of the Rapid Planning Toolkit (RPT) pilot implemented in Belize through the Integrated Planning Action Group (IPAG) under the Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Coalition (CSCC). Commissioned by the Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP), the study evaluates the effectiveness of the RPT in practice and identifies opportunities to strengthen its application across diverse Commonwealth contexts. The RPT addresses a critical gap in urban planning: the need for fast, coordinated, and inclusive responses to rapid urbanisation in contexts marked by institutional fragmentation, limited capacity, and increasing environmental and social pressures.

The assessment draws on 1) Stakeholder inputs and IPAG discussions, 2) Pre- and post-engagement surveys, 3) Observations from the Belize pilot and 4) Comparative international case studies. The key findings of the report are captured in the following table:

Area	Finding	Implication
<b>Rapid Planning</b>	Structured, time-bound and participatory processes improve coordination and decision-making	Enables faster, more coherent urban planning outcomes
<b>System Constraints</b>	Challenges are primarily systemic (fragmentation, weak coordination, misalignment with implementation)	Technical solutions alone are insufficient. Governance reform is needed
<b>Integration</b>	Land, housing, infrastructure, services and environment are interconnected but poorly aligned in practice	Requires integrated, cross-sector planning approaches
<b>Participation</b>	Stakeholder engagement is essential but depends on facilitation capacity and institutional commitment	Risk of tokenism without strong leadership and inclusive processes
<b>Capacity Building</b>	“Learning-by-doing” is more effective than traditional training models	Embed capacity building within planning processes
<b>Enabling Conditions</b>	Effectiveness depends on governance alignment, institutional capacity, and financing links	RPT must operate within a broader system of planning and delivery

Across the research, five key insights emerged:

- **Planning systems are too slow and fragmented** to respond to rapid urbanisation
- **Integration across sectors and scales** remains the central challenge
- **Implementation is the weakest link**, with a persistent gap between plans and delivery
- **Capacity constraints are systemic**, requiring tools, support, and institutional reform
- **Context matters**. Planning approaches must be adaptable to local conditions

The findings highlight the need for a systems-based approach to urban planning, where tools like the RPT are embedded within broader frameworks of governance, finance, and capacity development. When supported by the right enabling conditions, the RPT has strong potential to deliver faster, more integrated, and more inclusive urban outcomes across the Commonwealth.

## 2 Policy Implications Note

The findings highlight clear priorities for IPAG, CAP and Commonwealth stakeholders to strengthen integrated, rapid and implementable urban planning systems that enables fast, inclusive, and implementable urban planning across Commonwealth contexts.

At the centre of such an approach lies integrated planning, and supportive tools such as the Rapid Planning Toolkit (RPT), as the enabling mechanism.

It is built upon five interconnected policy pillars that collectively enable integrated and effective urban planning: systems integration, which aligns planning with finance and housing; implementation pathways, which link plans to delivery and investment; governance and coordination, which ensure alignment across multiple levels and sectors; inclusion and participation, which foster legitimate, community-driven processes; and capacity and learning, which emphasise train-through-doing approaches and peer exchange.

Pillar	Focus	Key Actions
Systems Integration	Align planning, finance, housing, and infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link spatial planning to budgeting and investment</li> <li>• Integrate RPT into formal planning systems</li> </ul>
Implementation Pathways	Bridge planning and delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect plans to project pipelines</li> <li>• Use spatial budgeting and phased delivery</li> </ul>
Governance and Coordination	Enable multi-level and cross-sector alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish coordination platforms</li> <li>• Clarify roles across institutions</li> </ul>
Inclusion and Participation	Ensure legitimacy and local ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen facilitation capacity</li> <li>• Introduce safeguards against exclusion</li> </ul>
Capacity and Learning	Build skills through practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt “train-through-doing”</li> <li>• Establish peer learning and communities of practice</li> </ul>

These pillars can be operationalised through two complementary policy proposals that strengthen both implementation and scalability.

**First, the adoption and adaptation of tools such as the RPT** to support context-sensitive, integrated urban planning and community development. This includes enabling application in low-data and informality-dominated environments, providing practical tools for mapping, participation, and data collection, and embedding climate, resilience and nature-based approaches. All levels of policy should also promote simplified processes of planning and clear visual guidance to ensure accessibility and collaboration across diverse institutional contexts.

**Second, the strengthening of the Commonwealth network as a platform for collaboration and delivery.** This includes facilitating peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange, supporting multi-country pilot projects and shared case studies, and enabling collaboration across government, academia and practice. Policy actions may also include the establishment of regional hubs and a Rapid Planning Academy to build sustained capacity, coordination and impact across Commonwealth cities.

Together, these proposals position rapid planning not as a standalone intervention, but as part of a broader systems-based transformation of urban planning practice across the Commonwealth. By aligning tools, governance, capacity, and collaboration, this approach enables cities to move from fragmented and reactive planning towards integrated, inclusive and implementation-ready urban development. If supported by the right enabling conditions, tools such as the RPT and the Commonwealth network can play a catalytic role in accelerating sustainable, resilient and equitable urban outcomes at scale.

### 3 Introduction

Rapid urbanisation is one of the most significant challenges facing cities across the Commonwealth, particularly in contexts characterised by limited institutional capacity, fragmented governance systems and increasing exposure to climate risks. Cities must respond rapidly and simultaneously to pressures related to housing demand, land tenure complexity, infrastructure provision, service delivery and livelihood generation, often within planning systems that are not designed to operate at the speed and scale required. Conventional planning remains slow not only in plan-making and approvals, but because it operates within fragmented governance systems, risk-averse institutional cultures, and misalignment with financing and delivery mechanisms, resulting in processes that are overly sequential, difficult to implement, and insufficiently responsive to urgent and rapidly changing urban challenges.

These challenges are further intensified in rapidly growing urban areas where informal development, infrastructure deficits and environmental risks intersect. Planning systems often struggle to integrate land use, housing, services and economic development coherently, resulting in uneven urban outcomes and missed opportunities for more inclusive and resilient growth. At the same time, constraints in data, tools and technical capacity limit the ability of local governments to act decisively. This creates a critical need for approaches that are not only technically robust, but also practical, adaptable and capable of delivering results within short timeframes.

There is therefore a growing recognition of the need for integrated, inclusive and action-oriented planning systems that enable faster decision-making and delivery. Within the Commonwealth context, this includes the need to leverage professional networks, enhance knowledge exchange and support capacity development in ways that are scalable across diverse country contexts. Importantly, planning approaches must also move beyond static, long-term master planning models towards more flexible, iterative and implementation-oriented processes.

The RPT has been developed as a practical response to these challenges. Designed as a structured, time-bound and participatory approach, the RPT aims to support governments, planning professionals and stakeholders in rapidly generating integrated spatial priorities while strengthening collaboration and decision-making across sectors. The toolkit emphasises the use of simplified planning tools, participatory methods and iterative processes to enable faster and more coordinated responses to urban challenges. It also functions as a capacity-building mechanism, enabling practitioners to engage in “learning-by-doing” in contexts where formal training opportunities may be limited.

The Belize pilot, implemented under the Integrated Planning Action Group (IPAG) as part of the Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Coalition (CSCC), provides an important opportunity to assess how the RPT performs in practice. It enables examination of the toolkit’s application in a real-world setting, the experiences of participating stakeholders, and its potential to support more integrated and implementable planning outcomes. As a proof-of-concept, the pilot also offers valuable insights into how such approaches can be adapted and scaled across other Commonwealth contexts.

This report presents an independent academic assessment of the Belize pilot, commissioned by the Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP). The study aims to assess how the RPT functions in practice, identify its strengths, limitations and enabling conditions, and compare the Belize experience with similar planning initiatives in other contexts. It further generates policy-relevant insights to support the scaling of rapid, integrated planning approaches across the Commonwealth, drawing on inputs from a global range of experts as members of the IPAG.

## 4 Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to assess the application of the RPT in the Belize pilot and to generate evidence to inform its further development. The methodology is designed to produce practical, policy-relevant insights on effectiveness, usability and scalability.

### 4.1 Research Design

The research is structured around three interrelated components:

#### 4.1.1 Belize Pilot Assessment

Analysis of the application of the RPT during the Belize pilot, with a focus on the early stages of the planning process (Steps 1–2). This includes review of workshop processes, planning outputs and stakeholder interactions to assess how the toolkit supports rapid, integrated and implementation-oriented planning in practice.

#### 4.1.2 Stakeholder Insights

Collection and analysis of stakeholder perspectives through pre- and post-session surveys, as well as inputs from Integrated Planning Action Group (IPAG) discussions. This component captures perceptions of planning capacity, institutional constraints and the practical value of the RPT approach.

#### 4.1.3 Comparative Analysis

Review of selected integrated and rapid planning initiatives in other contexts to identify transferable lessons. Comparator cases were selected based on their relevance to integrated planning, application in capacity-constrained environments, use of accelerated or adaptive approaches, and availability of documented evidence.

### 4.2 Data Collection

Data for this study were drawn from multiple sources:

- **Survey Data:** A structured pre-session survey was used to investigate planning capacity, institutional context and key challenges. A post-session survey captured stakeholder reflections on the RPT process, including perceived effectiveness, usability, and potential for implementation and scaling. Participants of the survey are captured in appendix 2.
- **Stakeholder Inputs:** Qualitative inputs were collected from IPAG participants (appendix 1) through structured questions and discussions. These inputs provided additional insights into governance, coordination challenges and opportunities for applying the RPT across diverse contexts.
- **Workshop Observation and Documentation:** Observations of the Belize pilot sessions, together with a review of relevant workshop materials and outputs, informed the assessment of how the RPT was applied in practice, including its ability to support integration, participation and early implementation pathways.
- **Secondary Data:** Academic literature, policy reports and documentation from comparator case studies were reviewed to support the comparative analysis and strengthen the evidence base, with a focus on identifying scalable and transferable approaches.



## 4.3 Analytical Approach

The analysis was conducted using qualitative, thematic and comparative methods:

- **Thematic Analysis:** Survey responses and stakeholder inputs were analysed to identify recurring themes related to systems integration, governance, participation, capacity and implementation challenges.
- **Case Study Analysis:** The Belize pilot was examined as a single case study, focusing on process design, stakeholder alignment, cross-sector integration and early indications of implementability.
- **Cross-Case Comparison:** Comparator cases were analysed using a consistent set of analytical lenses, including planning objectives, process design, governance arrangements, participation, capacity development and scalability. This enabled the identification of key success factors, enabling conditions and transferable lessons for Commonwealth application.



## 5 Belize Pilot Assessment: Application of the Rapid Planning Toolkit

This section examines the application of the RPT in the Belize pilot, providing an evidence-based assessment of how the toolkit performs in practice. Drawing on survey data, stakeholder inputs, and field-based observations, the section analyses the implementation of the RPT, stakeholder experiences, and key insights emerging from the pilot.

As a proof-of-concept, the Belize pilot offers an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of a rapid, integrated and participatory planning approach in a context characterised by institutional fragmentation, capacity constraints and complex urban development challenges. The findings provide practical insights into both the strengths of the toolkit and the broader systemic conditions that shape its application.

### 5.1 Overview of the Belize Pilot

The Belize pilot was implemented under the Integrated Planning Action Group (IPAG) as part of the Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Coalition (CSCC). The pilot focused on the early stages of the RPT process (Steps 1–2), which are designed to support rapid diagnosis of urban conditions and the development of integrated spatial priorities.

The process brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including planning professionals, policymakers and technical experts, to participate in structured and time-bound planning sessions. These engagements aimed to facilitate cross-sector dialogue, develop a shared understanding of urban challenges, and identify priority areas for intervention.

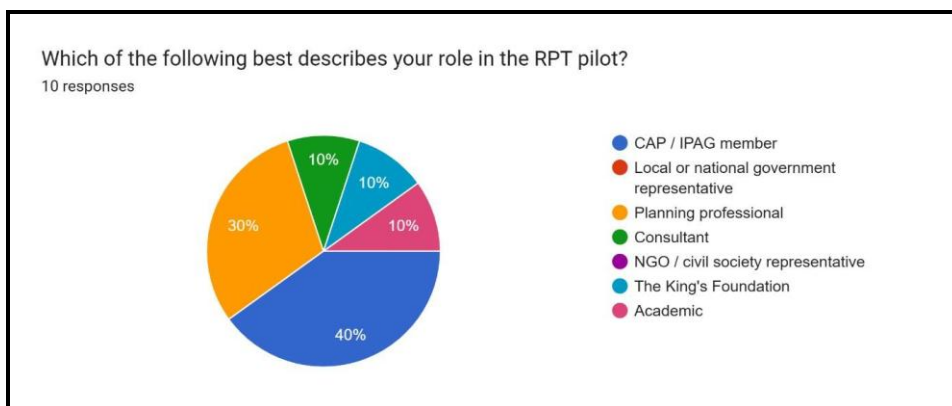
As an initial application of the toolkit, the pilot should be understood as a foundational step in a broader planning process, providing early insights into how rapid planning approaches can be applied and adapted in practice.

### 5.2 Pre-Session Survey: Baseline Conditions

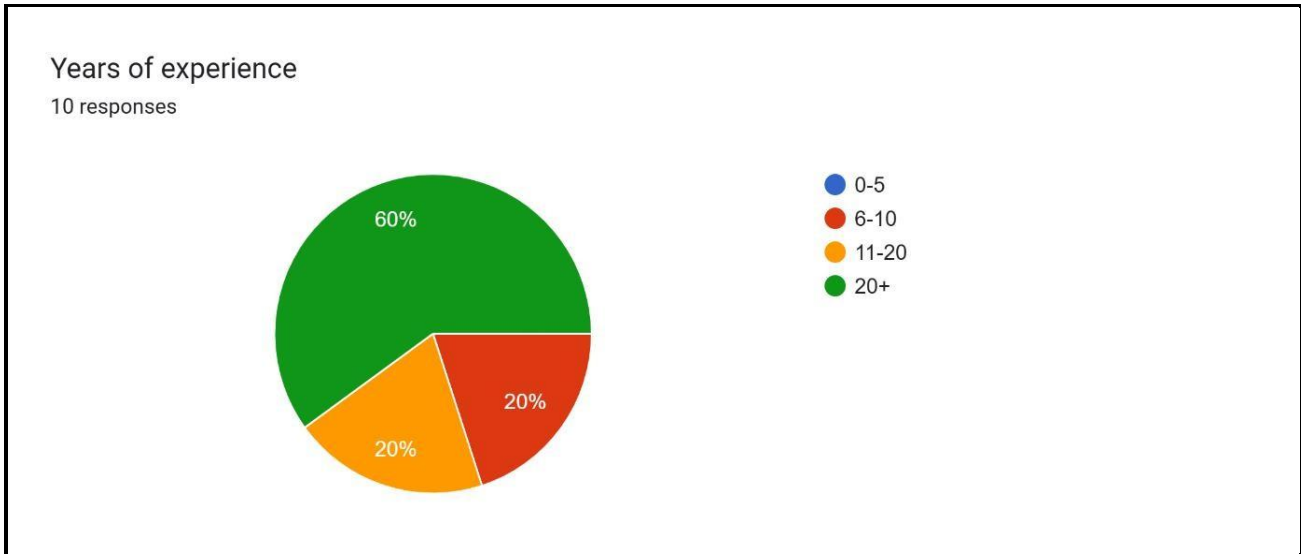
The pre-session survey provides a baseline assessment of participant profiles, planning capacity, and key challenges shaping urban planning practice. A total of 10 participants responded to the survey, offering insights into the institutional and professional context within which the RPT is being applied.

#### 5.2.1 Participant Profile and Experience

Survey respondents represent a highly experienced and technically strong cohort, predominantly composed of CAP/IPAG members and planning professionals. As shown in the respondent profile below, approximately 70% of participants fall within these categories, with limited representation from government and civil society stakeholders.

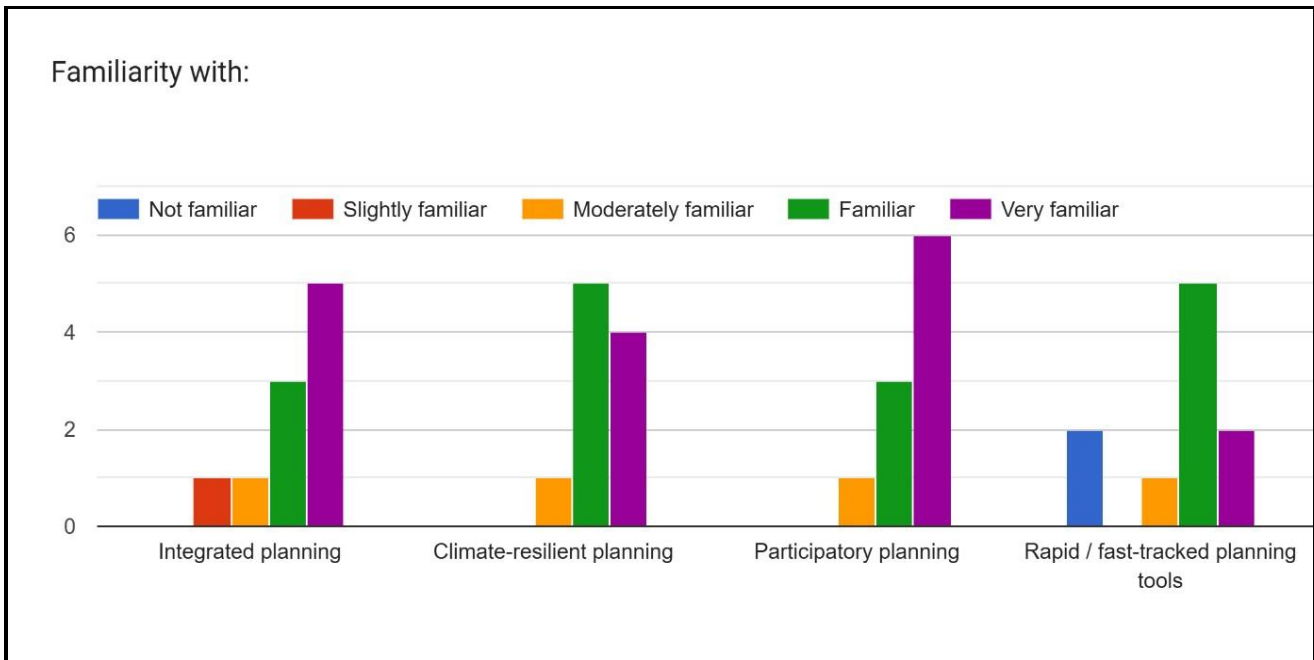


In addition, respondents are largely senior practitioners, with 60% reporting more than 20 years of experience (figure below). This may imply that the findings primarily reflect strategic-level perspectives rather than frontline or community-based experiences.



**5.2.2 Familiarity with Planning Approaches**

Respondents reported high levels of familiarity with integrated, climate-resilient and participatory planning approaches. However, familiarity with rapid or fast-tracked planning tools was comparatively lower (figure below), suggesting a potential gap in experience with accelerated and adaptive planning methodologies



This finding indicates that while foundational planning knowledge is strong, there is a relative need for tools and approaches that support faster and more flexible planning processes.



### 5.2.3 Baseline Capacity and Confidence

Participants expressed high levels of confidence in their individual ability to contribute to integrated urban planning, as well as generally strong confidence in their organisations' capacity.

However, responses were more mixed in relation to:

- The effective integration of climate considerations.
- The meaningful inclusion of community voices in planning processes.

At the same time, there was strong agreement that existing planning processes are too slow to respond to current urban challenges, highlighting a key systemic constraint.

### 5.2.4 Key System Constraints

Despite strong individual and organisational capacity, the survey data point to several systemic challenges:

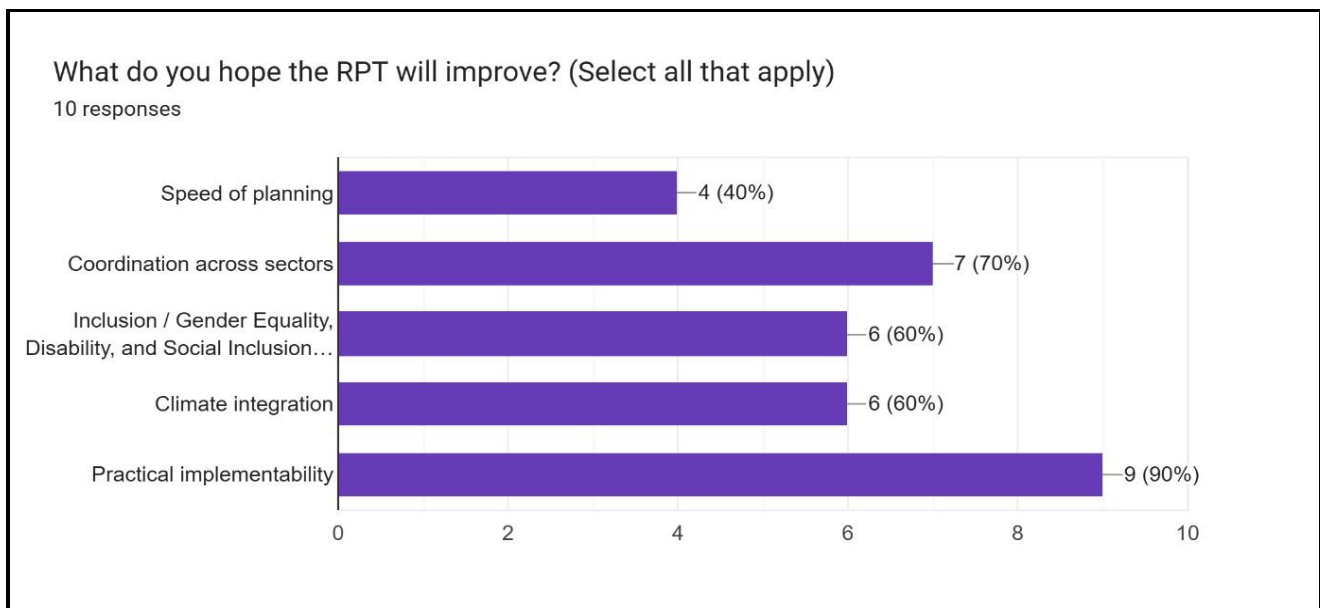
- Slow and fragmented planning processes, limiting responsiveness to rapid urbanisation.
- Weak integration across sectors, particularly between land, housing, infrastructure and services.
- Gaps in climate integration and social inclusion, reflecting uneven practice across contexts.
- Persistent disconnect between planning and implementation, reducing effectiveness of planning outputs.

These findings highlight that the primary constraint is not a lack of technical knowledge, but rather limitations in how planning systems function in practice.

### 5.2.5 Expectations of the RPT

Survey responses indicate strong, outcome-oriented expectations of the RPT. As shown in the figure below, respondents place the greatest emphasis on:

- Improving practical implementability of rapid planning approaches (90%)
- Strengthening cross-sector coordination (70%)
- Enhancing climate integration and social inclusion (60%)



While increasing the speed of planning is recognised as important, it is considered secondary to improving coordination and delivery.

Open-ended responses further reinforce these priorities, highlighting key challenges such as:

- The gap between planning and implementation.
- Fragmented governance and coordination.
- Managing informal and rapid urban expansion.
- Aligning development with climate and environmental priorities.

### **5.2.6 Summary**

Overall, the baseline findings reveal a clear disconnect between strong technical capacity and the performance of planning systems. While participants demonstrate high levels of expertise and confidence, planning processes remain constrained by fragmentation, slow decision-making, and weak links to implementation.

These findings position the RPT as most valuable where it can address these systemic challenges, particularly by strengthening coordination, embedding climate resilience and inclusion, and supporting integrated planning approaches that translate more effectively into actionable outcomes.

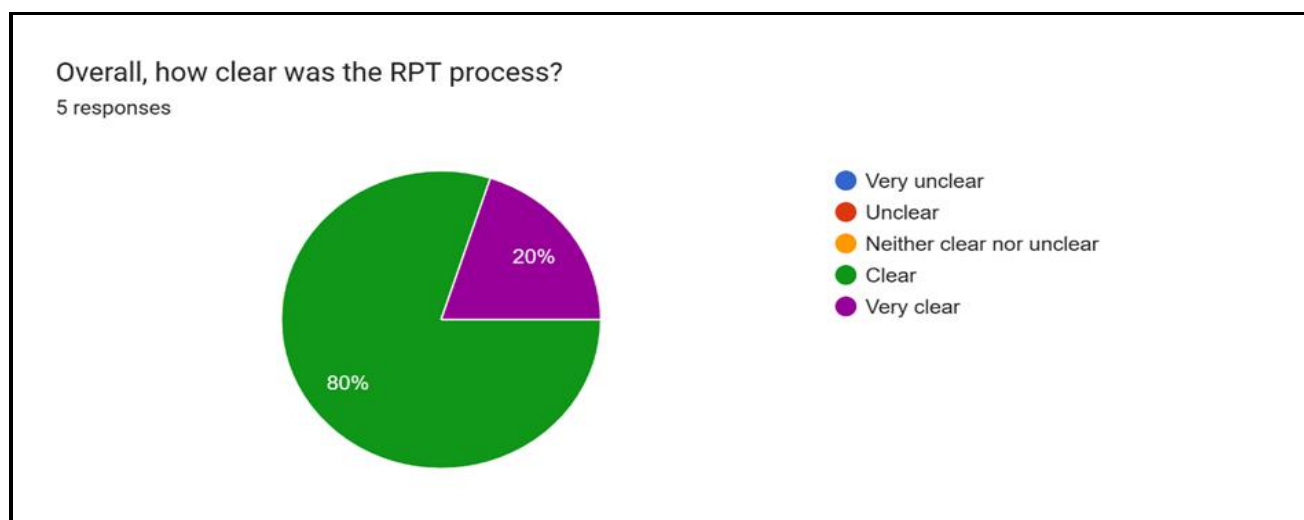


## 5.3 Post-Session Survey: Stakeholder Reflections

This section presents findings from the post-session survey, capturing stakeholder reflections on the application of the RPT. The same participation group was used for this phase of the study (see Appendix 2). However, a smaller number of responses were received, which is acknowledged as a limitation. This reflects the practical challenges of conducting a global study across different time zones, contexts and timeframes, where sustained engagement can vary despite consistent outreach. The results provide insight into participant experiences, perceived effectiveness of the toolkit, and key considerations for its practical application, institutionalisation and further development.

### 5.3.1 Overall Experience of the RPT Process

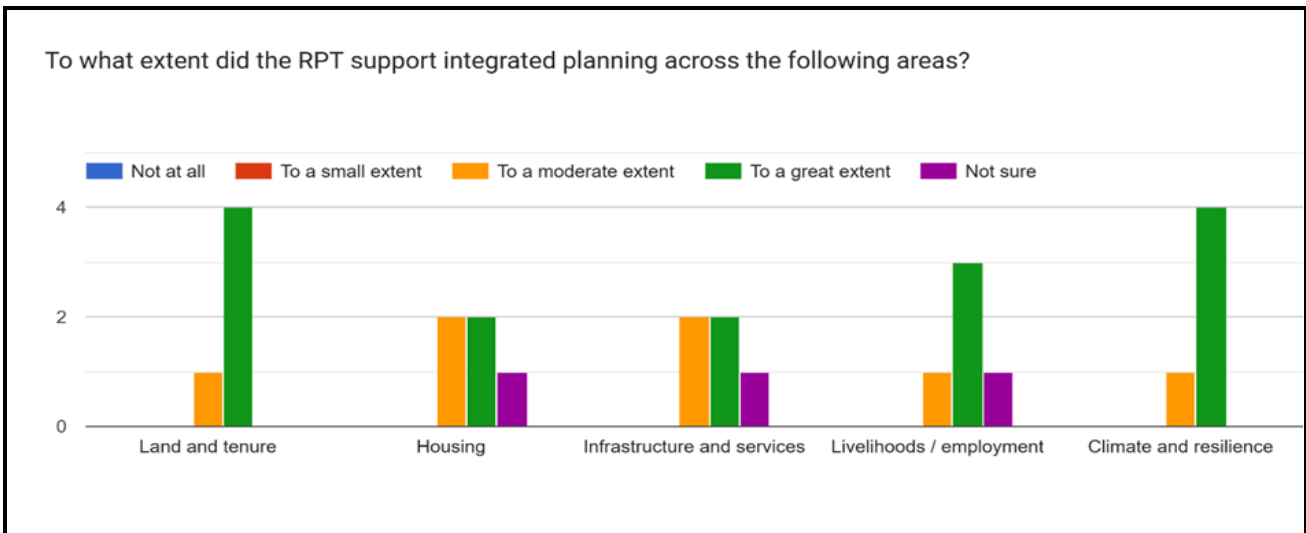
Overall, stakeholder responses indicate that the RPT is perceived as a structured, clear and practical planning approach, particularly valued for its step-by-step methodology and action-oriented design.



Participants highlighted that the toolkit supports rapid concept development and strategy formulation, enabling planning processes to be undertaken within relatively short timeframes. The structured nature of the process was seen as particularly beneficial in aligning planning activities with political and budgetary cycles.

### 5.3.2 Perceived Support for Integrated Planning

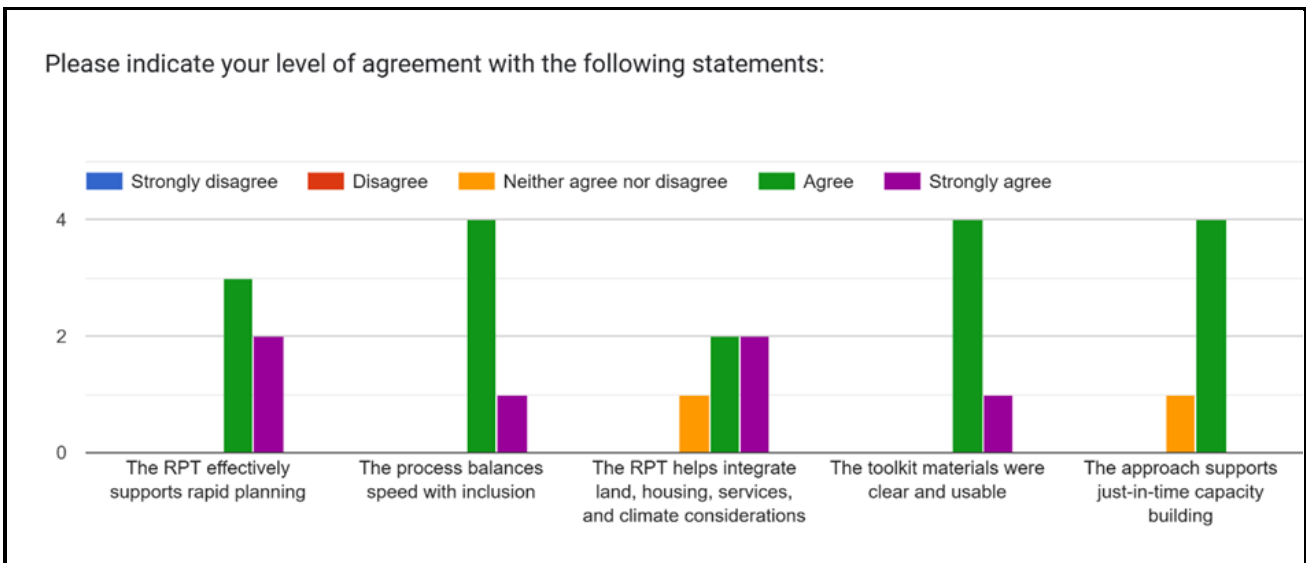
Stakeholder feedback suggests that the RPT contributes positively to integrated planning processes, particularly by facilitating collaboration across sectors and improving coordination between planning actors.



Participants emphasised that the participatory and action-oriented components of the toolkit support more inclusive and integrated decision-making, while maintaining a level of structure that enables practical outcomes.

### 5.3.3 Toolkit Effectiveness and Practical Applicability

The RPT is widely perceived as a practical tool for accelerating planning processes, particularly in contexts where conventional planning approaches are slow or fragmented.



Respondents noted that:

- The toolkit enables rapid generation of planning outputs.
- Its structured format supports clarity and usability.
- The process aligns well with real-world planning constraints, including time and resource limitations.

However, feedback also highlights that effectiveness may vary depending on:

- Institutional alignment.
- Policy and legislative coherence.
- Availability of political and financial support.

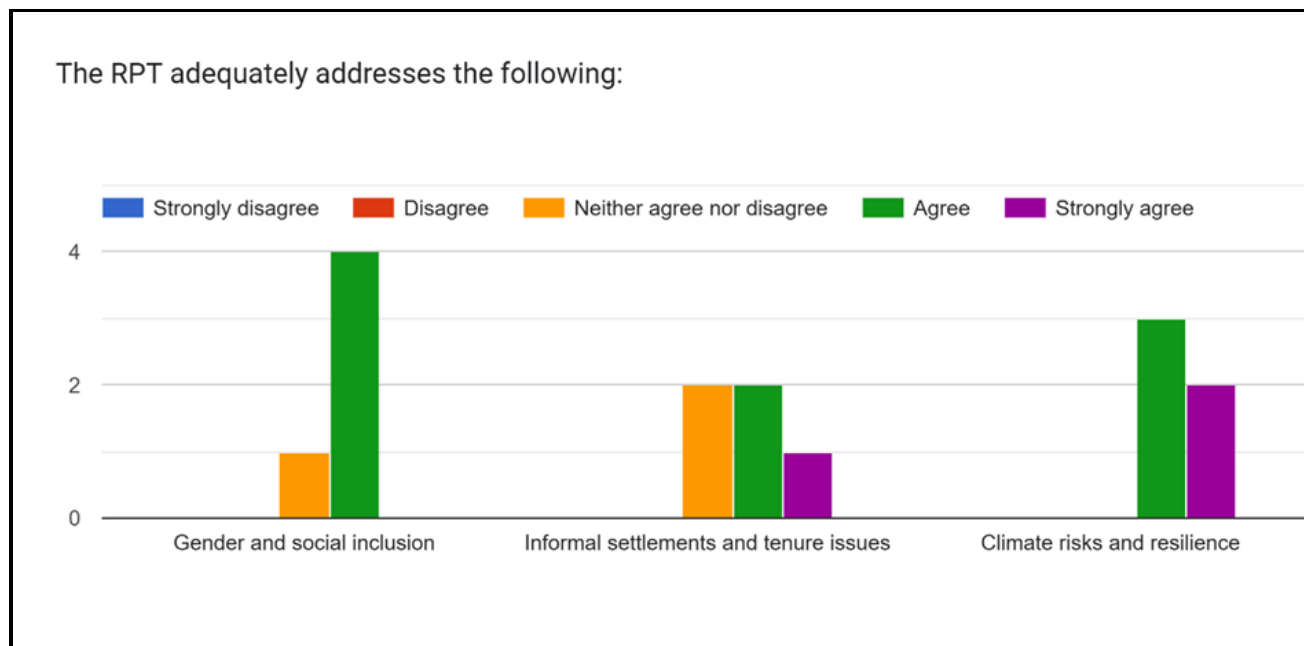


### 5.3.4 Inclusion and Climate Considerations

Stakeholder responses indicate that the RPT has the potential to support inclusive and climate-responsive planning, particularly through its participatory design and integrated framework.

However, several challenges were identified:

- Ensuring meaningful inclusion in contexts with limited civic engagement.
- Integrating planning processes with existing governance and legislative systems.
- Addressing social and political sensitivities, particularly in contested or informal areas.



These findings suggest that while the toolkit provides a strong framework, effective inclusion and climate integration depend on contextual and institutional factors.

### 5.3.5 Strengths, Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Stakeholders identified several aspects of the RPT that are likely to work well in practice:

- Clear, step-by-step structure supporting rapid planning.
- Strong emphasis on participation and collaboration.
- Alignment with practical planning timelines and constraints.
- Ability to support concept development and strategic planning.

Key challenges highlighted include:

- Limited civic engagement in some contexts affects participation.
- Institutional and legislative inconsistencies across governance levels.
- Dependence on political will and financial support.
- Potential resistance or contestation in implementation, particularly in sensitive or informal areas.

## Opportunities for Improvement

- Suggestions for strengthening the RPT include:
- Enhancing alignment with statutory planning systems.
- Developing complementary tools (e.g. user-friendly guides for communities).
- Strengthening visual and communication components.
- Supporting peer learning and knowledge exchange across contexts.

### 5.3.6 Institutionalisation and Scalability

- Stakeholders emphasised that long-term impact would depend on the ability to institutionalise the RPT within planning systems. Key pathways identified include:
- Embed the RPT within national and local planning policies to ensure it becomes part of standard planning practice rather than a standalone tool.
- Establish regional centres of expertise and peer learning platforms to support knowledge exchange, capacity building and continuous improvement.
- Strengthen collaboration between public and private sector actors to align policy, investment and delivery, ensuring that planning outcomes are implementable and scalable.
- Demonstrate impact through pilot applications that test, refine and showcase the practical value of the RPT across different contexts.

These findings highlight that scalability is closely linked to governance alignment, capacity development and demonstrated effectiveness in practice.

### 5.3.7 Summary

Overall, stakeholder reflections suggest that the RPT is perceived as a practical, structured and adaptable planning tool with strong potential to support rapid and integrated urban planning.

However, its effectiveness is contingent on enabling conditions, including:

- Institutional coordination.
- Political and financial support.
- Context-sensitive approaches to inclusion and participation.

These findings reinforce the importance of positioning the RPT not as a standalone solution, but as part of a broader system of planning, governance and capacity development required to achieve sustainable and implementable urban outcomes.

## 6 Stakeholder insights: Integrated Planning Action Group (IPAG) discussions

This component captures strategic expert inputs gathered through structured discussions with members of the Integrated Planning Action Group (IPAG), providing a complementary evidence base to the survey data collected during the Belize pilot. Unlike the survey findings, which reflect participant experiences of the RPT process, this component draws on the cross-context expertise of global practitioners and policymakers to generate system-level and policy-relevant insights.

The expert discussions were guided by a set of targeted framing questions, designed to critically reflect on both the RPT approach and wider planning system challenges across Commonwealth contexts. These included:

- *How can planning be fast-tracked in a more inclusive way to respond to rapid urbanisation?*
- *How to integrate land tenure, housing, services, employment and other matters into planning within the context of rapid urbanisation?*
- *What aspects of the RPT can support rapid, just-in-time capacity building where formal training is unavailable?*
- *How can multi-level, multi-discipline, cross-sector collaboration and the Commonwealth network be leveraged to help address these issues?*

These discussions enabled experts to reflect not only on the Belize pilot, but also on comparative experiences across different institutional, geographic and resource contexts, generating insights into common constraints and enabling conditions for integrated planning. The expert inputs provide critical perspectives on systems integration, governance alignment, implementation pathways, participation and capacity development, directly informing the refinement of the RPT and its potential application across the Commonwealth. Importantly, this component strengthens the policy relevance of the study by linking practical pilot insights with strategic, system-level considerations for scaling rapid and inclusive planning approaches.

### 6.1 Fast-tracking planning while remaining inclusive

Fast-tracking planning can be achieved without compromising inclusivity by embedding participation, local knowledge, and coordination directly into rapid planning processes. Stakeholder inputs consistently demonstrate that speed and inclusion are not mutually exclusive but must be deliberately integrated through process design.

Tools such as the RPT are effective when combined with structured stakeholder engagement, including workshops at each stage and active involvement of local governance structures. This enables parallel processes of knowledge generation, decision-making and validation, reducing delays associated with traditional sequential planning approaches.

A key tension lies in balancing speed with meaningful participation. While rapid processes rely on short timelines aligned with political and budget cycles, inclusivity requires careful facilitation to avoid tokenistic engagement or elite capture. The legitimacy and implementability of outcomes depend on the extent to which stakeholders meaningfully influence decisions, rather than simply participate.

Effective approaches include the use of real-time data, participatory mapping, and evidence to support timely, decision-oriented planning, alongside interdisciplinary collaboration and action-oriented workshops.

Stakeholders further emphasise the importance of:

- Early integration of community knowledge through participatory processes
- Use of simplified planning tools and accessible data
- Clear leadership and institutional coordination
- Alignment with political and funding cycles

Fast-tracked planning is most effective when it combines structured processes, inclusive engagement and strong facilitation, supported by governance arrangements that enable implementation.

## 6.2 Integrating land tenure, housing, services and livelihoods.

Stakeholder inputs highlight that integration across land tenure, housing, infrastructure, services and livelihoods is central to addressing rapid urbanisation yet remains one of the most persistent systemic challenges in planning practice. Effective integration requires the use of coherent spatial frameworks that treat urban development as a connected system, rather than a set of sectoral interventions. The concept of a “settlement package” emerges as a critical approach, combining tenure, housing, services and livelihoods from the outset. The neighbourhood scale is identified as a key entry point, enabling planners to understand how land, infrastructure and economic activities interact in practice. Participatory mapping and stakeholder engagement play a critical role in bridging the gap between formal planning systems and informal realities.

However, several structural constraints were identified:

- Fragmentation between national and local governance systems, often due to policy misalignment
- Policy and legislative inconsistencies
- Challenges in delivering integrated infrastructure and housing
- Data limitations, particularly for climate and environmental integration

Stakeholders emphasise that integration must extend beyond planning to include implementation, requiring alignment between spatial planning, infrastructure investment and service delivery systems.

## 6.3 Enabling rapid, just-in-time capacity building

Stakeholder inputs strongly reinforce the role of the RPT as a practice-based capacity-building mechanism embedded within the planning process. A key strength of the toolkit is its “learning-by-doing” approach, enabling Planners and Planning Officials to develop skills through direct engagement in mapping, analysis and collaborative decision-making. This represents a shift from traditional training models towards embedded, action-oriented capacity development.

The effectiveness of this approach is supported by:

- Simple, structured and user-friendly tools
- Step-by-step guidance and visual templates
- Peer learning and collaborative processes
- Short, targeted training linked to implementation

At the same time, stakeholders identify areas for strengthening:

- Support for low-data and resource-constrained contexts
- Integration of low-cost technologies
- Development of tailored resources for different user groups

Capacity building and development is most effective when it is continuous, embedded and directly linked to implementation, rather than delivered as a standalone activity.

## 6.4 Leveraging multi-level and cross-sector collaboration.

Stakeholder responses highlight that multi-level, multi-disciplinary and cross-sector collaboration is foundational to integrated and implementable planning yet remains constrained by institutional fragmentation.

Effective collaboration requires coordination across:

- All government levels (national to local)
- All sectors (planning, housing, infrastructure, environment)
- Across stakeholder groups (public, private, community)

The Commonwealth network is identified as a critical enabling platform, supporting:

- Peer learning and professional exchange
- Knowledge sharing across contexts
- Technical collaboration and partnerships
- Development of shared tools and frameworks

However, key systemic challenges persist, including misalignment between planning authority and implementation responsibility, limited local enforcement capacity, institutional and legislative fragmentation, power imbalances across actors, and communication breakdowns, all of which constrain effective and coordinated urban planning. Stakeholders emphasise that collaboration must therefore move beyond short-term coordination towards sustained, practice-based partnerships that actively support implementation and strengthen system alignment across sectors and governance levels. At the same time, there is a clear opportunity to position the tools, such as RPT, within broader global agendas, such as climate action, resilience and biodiversity, thereby enhancing its relevance for policy alignment, access to financing, and long-term adoption across diverse Commonwealth contexts.

## 6.5 Further issues to consider

Stakeholder inputs highlight that the effectiveness of rapid planning approaches is shaped by broader systemic conditions, particularly variations in institutional capacity, governance structures and data availability across contexts. A differentiated, scale-sensitive approach is therefore required when applying the RPT, ensuring that tools and processes are adapted to local capacities and risk profiles. The RPT helps address capacity gaps by providing practical, accessible methods that enable local governments to rapidly identify growth areas and structure development in a coordinated and participatory way. Its emphasis on co-production strengthens relevance, ownership and implementability.

However, several constraints remain:

- Centralised planning authority limiting local implementation
- Legislative fragmentation and outdated frameworks
- Data limitations, particularly for climate and infrastructure planning

Stakeholders also highlight opportunities to strengthen the RPT through:

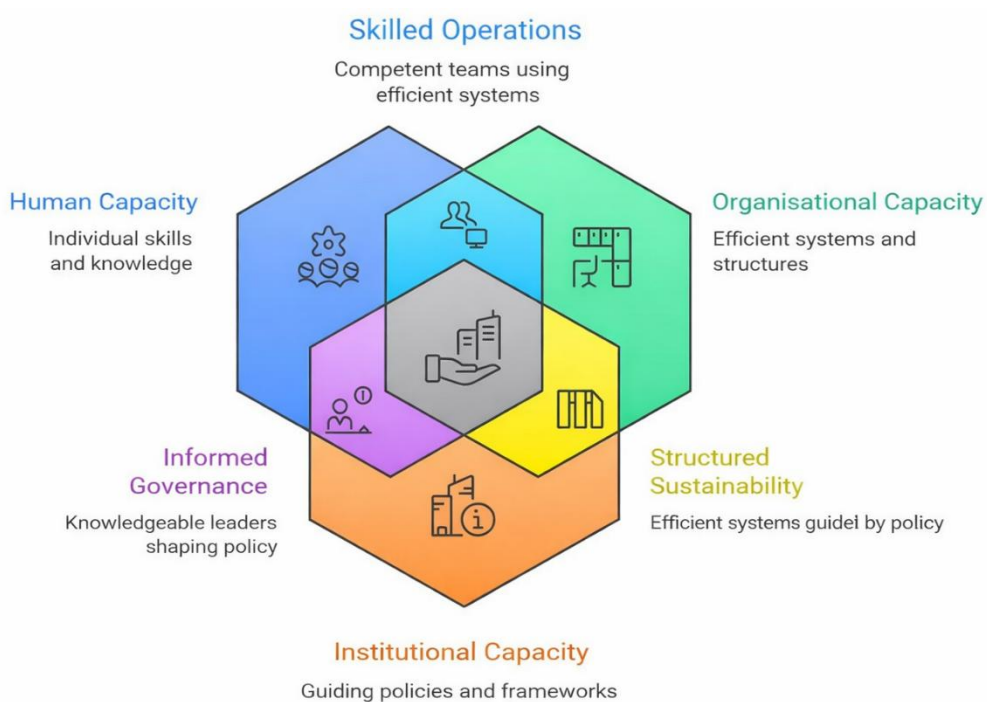
- Complementary tools (like community-facing guides)
- Stronger integration with resilience and financing frameworks
- Enhanced support for infrastructure and service planning
- Knowledge sharing (shared learning process)

The RPT demonstrates strong potential as a facilitating mechanism within a broader system of planning, governance and capacity development.

Key cross-cutting insights include:

- Balancing speed with meaningful inclusion through deliberate process design
- Embedding integration across land, housing, infrastructure and livelihoods
- Linking planning directly to implementation and investment systems
- Embedding capacity development within practice
- Strengthening governance alignment and cross-sector coordination

These findings reinforce the positioning of the RPT as an enabling mechanism that supports integrated, inclusive and implementable urban planning at scale across the Commonwealth.



## 7 Comparative Analysis: Case studies of Integrated and Rapid Planning in Practice

This section situates the RPT within a broader landscape of integrated and accelerated planning approaches by analysing three comparator cases: Indonesia's National Slum Upgrading Program (KOTAKU), Rwanda's Green Growth and Climate Resilience Strategy (GGCRS), and India's Smart Cities Mission. These cases provide empirically grounded examples of how planning systems respond to rapid urbanisation, institutional fragmentation, and capacity constraints across different governance contexts.

The analysis applies a structured comparative framework focusing on: (i) planning objectives and scope; (ii) speed and process design; (iii) integration across sectors; (iv) governance and institutional arrangements; (v) participation and inclusion; (vi) capacity-building mechanisms; and (vii) scalability and policy uptake. This approach enables a systematic evaluation of how integrated and rapid planning is operationalised in practice, and how these experiences inform the further development of the RPT.

### 7.1 Case Selection and Rationale

The selected cases represent three distinct but complementary models of planning reform in rapidly urbanising and capacity-constrained contexts (World Bank, 2019; Government of Rwanda, 2011; Government of India, 2015).

- **KOTAKU (Indonesia)** reflects a community-integrated, implementation-driven model, combining infrastructure delivery with participatory planning at scale.
- **Rwanda's GGCRS** represents a policy-led, institutionally embedded model, focused on mainstreaming climate resilience across sectors.
- **India's Smart Cities Mission** illustrates a mission-mode, accelerated urban transformation model, combining innovation in governance with time-bound delivery mechanisms.

These cases were selected due to their:

- National or multi-level scope.
- Strong emphasis on cross-sector integration.
- Availability of robust secondary evidence, including multilateral evaluations and peer-reviewed literature (ADB, 2022; Prasad and Alizadeh, 2020).

Collectively, they provide a comprehensive basis for analysing different pathways toward integrated, rapid and implementable planning.

In addition to their analytical diversity, the selected cases provide important geographical and institutional variation, strengthening the robustness of the comparative analysis. Indonesia represents a highly decentralised governance context, where local governments play a significant role in implementation, while Rwanda reflects a more centralised and coordinated model of state-led planning reform. India occupies an intermediate position, combining central policy direction with city-level implementation through hybrid governance arrangements.

This variation is particularly valuable for assessing the applicability of the RPT across different governance systems within the Commonwealth, where both centralised and decentralised planning models coexist. It also allows for examination of how institutional context shapes the effectiveness of rapid and integrated planning approaches.

Furthermore, the selected cases collectively capture different entry points into planning reform, service delivery (KOTAKU), climate policy (Rwanda), and urban competitiveness (India), providing a broader understanding of how planning tools can be adapted to different policy priorities. This diversity enhances the relevance of the comparative analysis for informing the evolution of the RPT as a flexible and context-responsive planning instrument.



## 7.2 Overview of Comparator Cases

Across the three cases, an important commonality is the recognition that traditional planning systems are insufficient to respond to the pace and complexity of urbanisation. Each programme represents an attempt to move beyond conventional, slow and fragmented planning approaches toward more integrated and action-oriented models.

However, the cases also illustrate that there is no single model for achieving this transition. Instead, planning reform is shaped by national priorities, institutional capacities and governance structures. While KOTAKU focuses on improving conditions within existing informal settlements, Rwanda prioritises long-term systemic transformation, and India emphasises rapid, visible urban improvements.

This variation highlights that planning tools such as the RPT must be adaptable to different contexts, capable of supporting both short-term action and long-term system transformation. It also reinforces the importance of aligning planning approaches with broader policy frameworks, governance arrangements and implementation capacities.

### 7.2.1 Indonesia National Slum Upgrading Program (KOTAKU)

KOTAKU is a nationally coordinated programme aimed at reducing urban slums through integrated upgrading interventions across more than 150 municipalities. It combines investments in infrastructure, housing improvements and service provision with strong community participation mechanisms (World Bank, 2019).

A defining feature of KOTAKU is its community-driven planning approach, particularly through the development of *Rencana Penataan Lingkungan Permukiman* (RPLP), which are locally developed settlement plans that guide upgrading interventions (Ministry of Public Works and Housing, Indonesia, 2022).

The programme also demonstrates a significant impact in improving service delivery and affordability. For example, studies in Bandung show that KOTAKU-supported water infrastructure improved water quality and reduced household expenditure, particularly for low-income households (Urfanisa, Kazama and Takizawa, 2022).

However, challenges remain in coordination and governance. Evidence highlights issues related to unclear institutional roles, weak collaboration, and trust deficits among stakeholders, which can affect implementation outcomes (Zubaidah *et al.*, 2023).

### 7.2.2 Rwanda Green Growth and Climate Resilience Strategy (GGCRS)

Rwanda's GGCRS represents a national framework for integrating climate resilience into development planning, covering sectors such as land use, infrastructure, energy and agriculture (Government of Rwanda, 2011).

The strategy is notable for its emphasis on cross-ministerial coordination and long-term institutional reform, positioning climate resilience as a core component of national development rather than a standalone policy area (World Bank, 2022).

Urban applications of the strategy, particularly in Kigali, demonstrate how climate considerations can be embedded within spatial planning through initiatives such as flood risk management and green infrastructure development (GGGI, 2023).

Academic analyses further highlight the role of policy coherence and institutional alignment in enabling long-term sustainability, although implementation capacity and resource constraints remain ongoing challenges (Niyonsaba, 2025).

### 7.2.3 India Smart Cities Mission

Launched in 2015, the Smart Cities Mission is a national programme aimed at transforming urban areas through infrastructure investment, digital governance and area-based development approaches (Government of India, 2015).

A defining feature of the Mission is its mission-mode implementation structure, characterised by fixed timelines and the establishment of Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) to manage project delivery. This model enables rapid decision-making and execution but introduces complexities related to governance and accountability (Prasad and Alizadeh, 2020).

The programme has achieved significant scale, covering over 100 cities. However, outcomes have been uneven, with some cities demonstrating strong integration and innovation, while others face challenges related to data quality, institutional capacity and fragmented implementation (Singh and Upadhyay, 2023).

## 7.3 Comparative Overview of Cases

Case	Timeframe	Scale	Core Focus	Acceleration	Integration Strength	Relevance
Indonesia National Slum Upgrading (KOTAKU)	2016 – ongoing	National (multi-city)	Slum upgrading & service integration	Structured rollout cycles	Strong (land, housing, services, community)	Strong comparator for implementation, participation and capacity building
Rwanda Green Growth and Climate Resilience Strategy	2011 – ongoing	National	Climate development integration	Adaptive mainstreaming across ministries	Strong (crossministerial)	Good for governance coordination & climate mainstreaming
India Smart Cities Mission	2015 - ongoing	National	Urban transformation	Time-bound, accelerated delivery	Moderate to strong (varies by city)	Useful for analysing speed vs integration trade-offs

As shown in the table above, the cases differ in their primary focus and process design, ranging from community-based upgrading (KOTAKU) to national policy integration (Rwanda) and accelerated urban transformation (India). Despite these differences, all three demonstrate efforts to address fragmentation and improve coordination across sectors.

## 7.4 Cross-Case Analysis

### 7.4.1 Planning Objectives and Scope

The cases reflect different entry points into integrated planning:

- KOTAKU focuses on informal settlement upgrading, addressing immediate service and infrastructure deficits.
- GGCRS operates at a systemic level, embedding climate resilience across national development frameworks.
- The Smart Cities Mission targets urban transformation through strategic investments.

This diversity highlights that integrated planning can be driven by sectoral priorities (housing), cross-cutting agendas (climate), or urban competitiveness goals, each shaping implementation pathways differently.

## 7.4.2 Speed and Process Design

The three cases illustrate contrasting models of acceleration:

- Structured incremental delivery (KOTAKU), balancing speed with participation (World Bank, 2023).
- Adaptive policy integration (Rwanda), responsive to new data, iterative planning and integration across systems, that prioritise long-term institutional change.
- Time-bound mission delivery (India), enabling rapid outputs but creating pressure on coordination systems.

Evidence suggests that rapid delivery can generate visible outcomes but may also lead to fragmented or uneven implementation if not supported by strong institutional systems (Singh and Upadhyay, 2023).

An additional insight emerging from the comparative analysis is that acceleration in planning is not solely a function of time compression, but also of process design and decision-making structures. In KOTAKU, speed is achieved through standardised processes and decentralised implementation, enabling simultaneous activities across multiple locations. In contrast, Rwanda's approach accelerates outcomes through policy alignment and institutional coherence, reducing delays associated with conflicting mandates or fragmented decision-making.

In India, acceleration is driven by political prioritisation and dedicated implementation structures, such as Special Purpose Vehicles, which enable faster decision-making by bypassing traditional bureaucratic processes. However, this can also create parallel systems that may not be fully integrated into existing governance frameworks.

These findings suggest that effective acceleration requires a combination of clear processes, institutional alignment and decision-making authority, rather than simply reducing planning timelines. For the RPT, this implies that speed should be understood as a function of system efficiency rather than procedural compression alone.

## 7.4.3 Integration Across Sectors

Integration is a core objective across all cases, but is achieved differently:

- KOTAKU integrates services at the neighbourhood scale.
- Rwanda integrates systems at the policy and institutional level.
- India integrates sectors at the project and city level, with variable depth.

This demonstrates that integration operates across multiple scales, and its effectiveness depends on governance alignment and implementation capacity.

The comparative cases further demonstrate that integration is inherently complex and context-dependent, often requiring trade-offs between comprehensiveness and feasibility. While integrated planning is widely recognised as essential, achieving meaningful coordination across sectors remains challenging in practice.

In KOTAKU, integration is facilitated by a shared focus on settlement upgrading, which provides a clear operational entry point for coordinating investments. In Rwanda, integration is achieved through policy frameworks that align sectoral objectives, although translating these into local implementation can be challenging. In India, integration is often project-based, resulting in varying levels of coherence across cities.

These differences highlight that integration is not a static outcome, but an ongoing process that requires continuous coordination, negotiation and adaptation. They also reinforce the importance of institutional mechanisms that enable information sharing, joint decision-making and alignment of priorities across sectors.



#### 7.4.4 Governance and Institutional Arrangements

Governance structures vary significantly:

- KOTAKU relies on multi-level coordination and community institutions. Planning authority remains formally decentralised, but the programme introduces a strong national coordination and funding framework.
- Rwanda uses centralised coordination mechanisms. Planning is predominantly centralised, with strong national leadership driving policy integration.
- India employs semi-autonomous Special Purpose Vehicles, enabling flexibility but raising accountability concerns. Planning is typically fragmented across levels.

These differences highlight that governance design is central to enabling or constraining integrated planning.

A deeper examination of governance arrangements reveals that institutional clarity and accountability mechanisms are critical to effective planning outcomes. In KOTAKU, clearly defined roles between national agencies, municipalities and community organisations support coordinated implementation, although challenges remain in maintaining consistency across contexts.

In Rwanda, strong central coordination provides clarity and direction but may limit flexibility at local levels. In contrast, India's SPV model enables innovation and rapid decision-making, but has been criticised for creating parallel governance structures that may weaken democratic accountability and long-term institutional integration (Prasad and Alizadeh, 2020).

These variations highlight that governance arrangements must balance efficiency, accountability and inclusivity, ensuring that planning processes are both effective and legitimate. This underscores the importance of aligning planning tools with existing governance systems while also enabling flexibility and innovation.

#### 7.4.5 Participation and Inclusion

Participation is strongest in KOTAKU, where community engagement is embedded in planning and implementation processes. Rwanda's approach is more policy-driven, while India's participation mechanisms vary across cities.

This suggests that deep participation is most effectively achieved at the local level, particularly where communities are directly involved in planning and implementation.

#### 7.4.6 Capacity Building and Professional Skills

Capacity-building approaches differ across the three cases, but all emphasise strengthening skills through practice rather than theory alone. In Indonesia (KOTAKU), this is achieved through embedded technical support working directly with communities and local governments. In Rwanda, the focus is on strengthening institutions and building capacity within government systems to support long-term policy implementation. In India, capacity building is supported through technical assistance and digital training linked to project delivery. Across all cases, a consistent insight emerges: capacity development is most effective when it is embedded within implementation processes, rather than delivered as standalone training. This reinforces the importance of "learning-by-doing" approaches, where skills are developed in real time through planning and delivery activities.

### 7.4.7 Scalability and Policy Uptake

All cases demonstrate scalability, but through different mechanisms:

- KOTAKU through programme replication and community engagement.
- Rwanda through policy integration.
- India, through national rollout with mixed long-term impact.

This highlights that scalability depends on institutionalisation rather than replication alone.

The comparative analysis also highlights that participation is not only a normative objective but a practical requirement for effective implementation. In KOTAKU, community engagement contributes to more accurate identification of needs and priorities, as well as stronger ownership of interventions. This enhances both the legitimacy and sustainability of planning outcomes.

However, participation processes are resource-intensive and require strong facilitation to avoid exclusion or elite capture. In Rwanda and India, where participation is more limited or uneven, there is a greater risk that planning outcomes may not fully reflect local needs or may face resistance during implementation.

These findings suggest that participation must be carefully designed to balance inclusivity with efficiency, particularly in rapid planning contexts. For the RPT, this reinforces the importance of embedding structured and context-sensitive participation mechanisms within accelerated planning processes.

## 7.5 Comparative Analysis Across Analytical Lenses

Analytical Lens	Indonesia National Slum Upgrading Program (KOTAKU)	Rwanda Green Growth and Climate Resilience Strategy	India Smart Cities Mission
1. Planning Objectives & Scope	National slum upgrading across 150+ municipalities. Example: Upgrading in Surabaya and Makassar, targeting informal settlements with integrated infrastructure.	National climate development integration framework influencing spatial and economic planning. Urban applications in Kigali via green urbanisation and flood-risk management.	National urban transformation mission covering 100 cities. Example: Area-Based Development in Pune and retrofitting projects in Bhubaneswar.
2. Speed & Process Design	Structured rollout cycles; city-level settlement plans prepared within defined funding windows. Rapid small-scale infrastructure delivery in Surabaya.	Policy mainstreaming rather than project acceleration; integration embedded through iterative national planning reforms.	Mission-mode implementation with fixed timelines; Special Purpose Vehicles established to fast-track delivery in Pune and Bhubaneswar.
3. Integration Across Sectors	Integrated investments: roads, drainage, sanitation, housing improvements in Makassar, coordination between housing, infrastructure, and local government.	Integration of land use, agriculture, energy, and climate resilience into national frameworks; Kigali's green corridor and flood mitigation integration.	Area-Based Development combining transport, ICT, public space, utilities; variable integration depth across cities.

4. Governance & Institutional Arrangements	National – municipal coordination via the Ministry of Public Works; community implementation groups at the neighbourhood level.	Cross-ministerial coordination (environment, finance, infrastructure); national oversight with sectoral alignment.	City-level SPVs operating semi autonomously; a central-municipal funding structure.
5. Participation & Inclusion	Community-led settlement upgrading plans (RPLP); participatory mapping in Makassar informal settlements.	Stakeholder consultation embedded in national strategy; less community-scale participatory evidence compared to KOTAKU.	Citizen consultations during the Smart City proposal stage (such as Bhubaneswar’s large-scale citizen engagement process).
6. Capacity Building & Professional Skills	Embedded municipal capacity strengthening; technical facilitation teams supporting local planners.	Institutional strengthening through climate mainstreaming guidelines and planning reforms.	Technical assistance units and digital governance training within SPVs.
7. Uptake & Scalability	Nationwide replication model; thousands of hectares of slum areas targeted; strong secondary evaluation evidence (World Bank reports).	National policy integration; climate resilience principles embedded in long-term development planning.	Scaled across 100 cities; mixed evidence of sustained institutional transformation beyond the project lifecycle.

As shown in the table above the comparative analysis highlights both convergence and divergence across planning systems, particularly in relation to governance coordination, participation models and implementation pathways.

## 7.6 Cross-Case Synthesis

The comparative analysis reveals four key insights.

First, governance and institutional alignment are critical enablers of integrated planning. Across all cases, fragmentation remains a key constraint, requiring coordinated mechanisms across levels of government.

Second, speed must be balanced with integration and inclusion. While accelerated approaches can generate rapid outputs, their effectiveness depends on their ability to maintain coordination and stakeholder engagement.

Third, capacity building is most effective when embedded in practice. Programmes that integrate learning into implementation processes demonstrate stronger outcomes.

Fourth, scalability depends on institutionalisation and policy alignment, rather than replication alone.



## 7.7 Implications for the RPT

The findings reinforce that the RPT aligns strongly with global practice but must be positioned within a broader system.

- It shares similarities with KOTAKU in integration and participation.
- It can benefit from Rwanda's focus on policy alignment and institutional reform.
- It must carefully navigate trade-offs observed in India between speed and system coherence.

This entails that the RPT should be understood as a catalytic tool within a wider governance and implementation ecosystem.

A further insight from the comparative analysis is the importance of linking planning processes to implementation and financing mechanisms. Across all three cases, the effectiveness of planning interventions is closely tied to the availability of resources, institutional capacity and delivery systems. Where these elements are aligned, planning is more likely to translate into tangible outcomes.

The analysis also highlights the role of political commitment and leadership in driving planning reform. In both Rwanda and India, strong national leadership has been instrumental in advancing integrated planning initiatives, while in Indonesia, sustained programme support has enabled long-term implementation.

Finally, the cases demonstrate that planning reform is inherently iterative. Initial interventions often serve as a foundation for further refinement and scaling, rather than delivering complete solutions. This reinforces the need for planning tools that are adaptable, scalable and capable of evolving.



## 8 Conclusions

This section draws on observations from IPAG discussions and insights from the Belize Pilot Field Report to provide a system-level, practice-based assessment of how the RPT performs in context, and what this means for strengthening integrated and implementable planning systems across the Commonwealth.

### 8.1 Planning Systems and Institutional Context

A central observation is that planning challenges are not primarily technical, but systemic and institutional, reflecting weak authorising environments, fragmented legislation and overlapping mandates. This limits the ability of planning systems to move from strategy to implementation. Responsibilities related to land, infrastructure, housing and environmental management are distributed across multiple institutions with limited coordination. As a result, planning is often reactive rather than proactive. This reinforces the need to reposition planning as a coordinating function that aligns governance, finance and delivery systems.

### 8.2 Land, Informality and Governance Dynamics

Land tenure and access remain core drivers of urban development patterns, with informal settlement dynamics reflecting deeper governance and institutional challenges. A recurring pattern was identified in which informal occupation precedes planning and infrastructure provision, reinforcing cycles of unplanned growth. This highlights the need for planning approaches that engage with, rather than exclude, informality and that integrate land, housing and service provision from the outset.

### 8.3 Integration and Coordination Challenges

Consistent with stakeholder inputs, the Belize pilot highlights that integration is both essential and difficult to achieve in practice, due to fragmentation across governance levels and sectors. However, the pilot demonstrates that structured, time-bound and participatory approaches such as the RPT can act as a catalyst for integration, enabling cross-sector dialogue and shared prioritisation. This reinforces the importance of embedding integration within governance, coordination mechanisms and implementation pathways.

### 8.4 Community Dynamics and Engagement

The pilot highlights that informal settlements are complex socio-economic systems, requiring context-sensitive, trust-based and participatory approaches. Meaningful inclusion is not automatic but must be deliberately designed and facilitated, ensuring that community knowledge informs decision-making and supports implementable outcomes.

### 8.5 Capacity, Leadership and Facilitation

The effectiveness of the RPT depends on leadership, facilitation and practical competencies, rather than technical tools alone. Strong leadership, skilled facilitation and simple, structured processes are critical enabling conditions for rapid and inclusive planning.

## 8.6 The RPT as a Catalyst for Planning Processes

A key conclusion is that the RPT is most effective as a catalytic mechanism within a broader planning system, rather than a standalone solution. While it successfully initiates integrated planning processes and stakeholder alignment, its long-term impact depends on governance alignment, financing, institutional capacity and sustained engagement.

## 8.7 Summary

Overall, the Belize pilot demonstrates that rapid and integrated planning is both feasible and valuable, but its effectiveness is shaped by broader system conditions.

Key enabling factors include:

- Institutional alignment and governance clarity
- Strong leadership and facilitation
- Integration across sectors and systems
- Context-sensitive inclusion

A central insight is that sustainable urban development cannot be achieved through planning alone, but requires alignment across governance, finance, housing and capacity systems. The RPT demonstrates strong value as a facilitating and coordinating mechanism, enabling faster, more inclusive and more integrated planning processes. However, its impact is maximised when embedded within a wider system of implementation, investment and institutional support.

## 9 Recommendations: Four Reinforcing Levers of Change

This report set out to assess the application of the RPT and its relevance for strengthening integrated urban planning in rapidly urbanising and capacity-constrained contexts. A central conclusion is that urban planning challenges are fundamentally systemic, driven by fragmentation, weak coordination, limited implementation pathways, governance misalignment, and uneven capacity. Within this context, the RPT demonstrates strong value as a practical, accessible and globally relevant mechanism for accelerating integrated and participatory planning processes. It enables faster decision-making, supports stakeholder alignment, and helps establish shared spatial priorities through structured, iterative and inclusive approaches.

However, the findings make clear that planning tools alone are insufficient. Their effectiveness is determined not only by their design, but by how they are embedded within broader systems of governance, finance, housing delivery and institutional capacity. These dynamics are shaped by three critical tensions: balancing speed with legitimacy and meaningful participation; ensuring simplicity while retaining sufficient technical capability; and navigating the divide between local empowerment and national-level constraints. Without careful facilitation, there is a risk of tokenistic engagement or elite capture, while weak governance alignment can limit implementation.

The research reinforces that integration lies at the core of effective urban planning, yet requires deliberate coordination across land, housing, infrastructure, services, environmental systems, and livelihoods, including informal systems. It further highlights that capacity development must be embedded within practice, with “learning-by-doing” approaches offering a scalable and context-relevant model, particularly through train-through-doing approaches that integrate skills development directly into delivery processes. It also highlights the importance of moving towards integrated settlement models, supported by real-time and “good enough” data, community knowledge, and inclusive participation.

Drawing these insights together, the report advances a systems-based approach to urban planning, structured around four reinforcing levers: planning, finance, housing and capacity. Within this system, the RPT plays a catalytic role, supporting coordination, accelerating processes and enabling integration, while also acting as a platform for collaboration, peer learning, and embedded capacity building. However, its impact is maximised when embedded within broader institutional, policy and investment frameworks, and supported by strong facilitation and governance alignment, as explained accordingly.

### 9.1 Lever 1: Integrated Planning as the Foundation for Coordination

Integrated planning must move beyond coordination to become a mandated, multi-level governance function. Building on stakeholder insights, this requires:

- Embedding co-design, participatory mapping and iterative planning cycles as standard practice
- Strengthening local governance structures to ensure legitimacy and ownership
- Providing clear facilitation guidance to prevent tokenistic engagement and elite capture
- Aligning planning processes with national regulatory systems while enabling local flexibility

The Commonwealth should champion governance reform by supporting member states to strengthen local planning authority and accountability mechanisms, develop model governance frameworks that enable integrated, cross-sector planning, and facilitate stronger alignment between national and local policy systems. This approach directly addresses the persistent tension between local empowerment and national-level constraints, ensuring that cities are both enabled and supported to deliver more integrated and implementable planning outcomes.

## 9.2 Lever 2: Urban Finance as the Enabler of Implementation

The evidence strongly reinforces that planning without finance remains a critical systemic failure. To address this:

- Planning must integrate spatial budgeting, phased investment strategies and infrastructure financing
- Cities must adopt “good enough” planning linked to immediate funding pathways, rather than waiting for complete masterplans
- Financial mechanisms must explicitly support incremental and informal settlement upgrading

The Commonwealth should support the development of integrated planning–finance frameworks across member states, enable multi-country pilot programs that directly link planning outputs to investment pipelines, and position the RPT within a broader “rapid implementation ecosystem” rather than as a standalone planning instrument. This approach aligns with strong calls to embed the RPT within wider systems of policy reform and implementation support, ensuring that planning processes are directly connected to delivery and investment.

## 9.3 Lever 3: Housing as the Interface of Planning and Lived Outcomes

Stakeholder feedback strongly emphasises that fragmented approaches to land, housing, infrastructure and livelihoods are a core failure. Strengthened recommendations include:

- Embedding integrated settlement planning as a core component of the RPT
- Linking land tenure, infrastructure, services and employment systems from the outset
- Supporting community-led data generation and mapping (such as informal settlements, land ownership, environmental risks)
- Prioritising walkable, mixed-use neighbourhoods and incremental development approaches

The Commonwealth should promote integrated settlement models as a policy priority across member states, support knowledge exchange on land tenure, informal upgrading and inclusive housing delivery, and facilitate comparative learning platforms across Commonwealth cities. This reflects a strong and consistent consensus that meaningful outcomes depend on integration across systems, linking land, housing, infrastructure and livelihoods in a coordinated and inclusive way.

## 9.4 Lever 4: Skills and Capacity as the Enabling System

Capacity constraints remain one of the most significant barriers across Commonwealth contexts.

The evidence strongly supports:

- Embedding “train-through-doing” approaches within planning processes
- Developing simple, jargon-free tools and step-by-step guidance
- Supporting peer-to-peer learning and communities of practice
- Creating accessible tools for low-data environments

The Commonwealth should take a leading role in establishing a global capacity ecosystem, including:

- A Rapid Planning Academy as a flagship initiative
- Structured Communities of Practice across regions and themes
- Creating thematic networks (such as housing, climate resilience, informal settlements)
- Diaspora and regional knowledge linkages
- Develop a “People’s Guide” to planning to empower communities and improve accountability
- Support education pathways, including integrating planning literacy at school level

This directly responds to strong calls for peer learning, capacity building and Commonwealth collaboration as core mechanisms



## 9.5 Interlinkages Between the Four Levers

While each lever plays a distinct role, its effectiveness depends on how they interact as part of a broader system. The findings demonstrate that sustainable urban development requires simultaneous progress across all four levers, supported by coordination mechanisms and shared frameworks.

This systems perspective aligns with insights from the comparative analysis, which show that successful planning initiatives combine:

- Integrated spatial frameworks.
- Strong governance and institutional alignment.
- Embedded capacity-building mechanisms.
- Clear links to implementation and financing systems.

## 9.6 Implications for the RPT

The integrated findings reinforce the strategic value of the RPT as a tool for addressing systemic planning challenges. Crucially, the findings point to a fundamental shift: the RPT should no longer be understood as a standalone planning tool, but as part of a wider Commonwealth-enabled ecosystem that connects governance reform, financing alignment, capacity development and peer learning. This reflects strong stakeholder consensus that tools alone are insufficient, and that long-term impact is driven by systems, institutions and networks.

The RPT has significant potential to support faster, more inclusive and more implementable planning across the Commonwealth. Realising this potential will require:

- Stronger alignment with governance and financing systems, including clearer implementation pathways
- Continued refinement and adaptation to diverse contexts, particularly to balance simplicity with capability and support low-data environments
- Sustained investment in capacity development and knowledge exchange, including peer learning, communities of practice, and train-through-doing models
- Enhanced focus on inclusion and legitimacy through structured participation and facilitation approaches
- Stronger integration of climate resilience, biodiversity, and risk-informed planning frameworks

In this context, the Commonwealth has a critical enabling role to play, not only as a convener of knowledge and networks, but as a platform for scaling implementation through mechanisms such as a Rapid Planning Academy, thematic networks, and multi-country pilot programmes that link planning to delivery and investment. Ultimately, the contribution of the RPT lies in its ability to reframe planning as an integrated, action-oriented and system-wide process, connecting strategy to delivery and enabling more resilient, inclusive and sustainable urban development at scale, while strengthening local agency, enabling institutional alignment, and supporting coordinated action across planning, finance, housing and capacity systems.



## 10 Final Remarks

The tables below summarise the key findings of this report, structured around the four reinforcing levers of planning, finance, housing and capacity. Together, they highlight how the RPT operates within a broader system, and what is required to translate integrated planning into meaningful, implementable outcomes across Commonwealth contexts.

**Table: Summary of Key Findings Aligned to the Four Reinforcing Levers**

Lever	Insights	Key challenges	Implications	Priority actions
<b>Planning</b> (Integration and coordination)	Integrated planning is the central coordinating mechanism, and the RPT enables rapid, participatory and structured planning processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speed vs legitimacy</li> <li>Risk of tokenism and elite capture</li> <li>Fragmented sectoral planning</li> </ul>	Planning must move from static, siloed processes to iterative, inclusive and integrated systems that link sectors and scales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embed co-design, participatory mapping and iterative cycles</li> <li>Strengthen facilitation and inclusion frameworks</li> <li>Align planning with governance systems and implementation pathways</li> <li>Commonwealth to support multi-level governance alignment</li> </ul>
<b>Finance</b> (Implementation and delivery)	Planning without finance is a critical systemic gap, limiting implementation and impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plans disconnected from budgets</li> <li>Lack of investment pathways</li> <li>Delays due to over-reliance on complete data or masterplans</li> </ul>	Planning must be directly linked to investment, budgeting and delivery systems to become actionable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate spatial budgeting and phased investment strategies</li> <li>Enable “good enough” planning linked to immediate funding pathways</li> <li>Support incremental and informal settlement financing</li> <li>Commonwealth to enable integrated planning and finance frameworks and multi-country pilot programmes</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b> (Lived outcomes and inclusion)	Housing is the primary interface between planning and lived reality, requiring integrated settlement approaches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fragmentation of land, housing, infrastructure and livelihoods</li> <li>Formal systems vs informal realities</li> <li>Risk of displacement</li> </ul>	Effective planning must deliver integrated, inclusive and context-responsive settlement outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embed integrated settlement planning in all processes</li> <li>Link tenure, infrastructure, services and livelihoods</li> <li>Support community-led data and informal system integration</li> <li>Commonwealth to promote knowledge exchange and comparative learning across cities</li> </ul>
<b>Capacity</b> (Enabling system)	Capacity is a cross-cutting enabler, with “train-through-doing” identified as the most effective model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional training vs embedded learning</li> <li>Limited technical and institutional capacity</li> <li>Uneven access to knowledge and tools</li> </ul>	Capacity must be embedded within delivery processes, not treated as a separate activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institutionalise learning-by-doing approaches</li> <li>Develop People’s Guides and simple, accessible tools</li> <li>Build peer learning systems and Communities of Practice</li> <li>Commonwealth to establish a Rapid Planning Academy and global capacity ecosystem</li> </ul>

**Table: Cross-Cutting System Insights**

<b>System Dimension</b>	<b>Key Insight</b>	<b>Implication</b>
Challenges	Urban challenges are interdependent and systemic.	Requires simultaneous progress across all four levers, not isolated interventions.
Limits of tools	Tools like the RPT are valuable but insufficient in isolation.	Must be embedded within governance, finance and institutional systems.
Data and technology	Planning must rely on “good enough”, real-time and community-generated data.	Enable low-cost, flexible and participatory data systems.
Tensions	Speed vs legitimacy; simplicity vs capability; local vs national control.	Requires strong facilitation, adaptive systems and governance alignment.
Commonwealth role	The Commonwealth is a key enabler of scale and coordination.	Position the RPT within a Commonwealth-enabled ecosystem of reform, capacity and implementation.

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## 12 Appendices

### Appendix 1: Belize Case Study Participants

Name	Organization
Alrick Flores	Belize City Building Unit -Technical Manager
Augustine Choc	Belize City Council Planning-Asst. to the City Planner
Burnell Jones	Belize City Council
Carla Patnett	Belize City Council
Carol Archer	CAP/University of Technology Jamaica
Carolyn Trench-Sandiford	Belize Association of Planners
Charles Miranda	Neighbourhood Representative (Port Loyola)
Chelsea Perera	Coastal Zone Authority Management
Councillor Allan Pollard	Works, Infrastructure, Urban Development, Labor Relations
Councillor Edmund Kwan	Municipal Court, Enforcement, Internal Security
Councillor Sherwin Garcia	Parks & Playgrounds, Beautification
Councillor Stephanie Hamilton	Tourism & Diaspora Relations, Foreign Affairs & Sister City Relations
Dr. Candice Pitts	City Administrator
Erin Garnett	Belize City Council
Florence Goldson	Belize Association of Professional Planners
Fredrick Hunter	BZ Red Cross
Gianie Staine	Neighbourhood Representative (Port Loyola)
Hon. Gilroy Usher	Minister - Port Loyola Area Representative
Keisha Rodriguez	Director Ministry of Natural Resources MNRPM
Lea Haddad	The King's Foundation
Leslie Ohomele	The King's Foundation
Martin Carlos	Ministry of National Resources MNRPM
Mayor Bernard Wagner	Belize City Mayor
Melony Dawson	Belize City Council
Monica Usher-Quich	Port Loyola
Norman W. Usher	Port Loyola constituency
Philip Jones	Bus operator President BBA
Ramon Menjivar	Belize City Council
Roman Nicholson	Development Finance Corp
Vidal Bernadez	Belize Forest Dept

## Appendix 2: Participation and Stakeholder Report Participants

Name	Surname	Organization
Kalim	Siddiqi	Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA)
Joe	Mulligan	Commonwealth Engineers Council (CEC)
Leslie	Ohomele	The King's Foundation
Gertrude Rose	Gamwera	Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)
Kevin	Hogan	Government of Guyana
Mark	Kanawa	Government of Sierra Leone
Sylvia	Masabo	Zambia
Bernard	Wagner	Belize City Council
Ian	Shapiro	BRE Group
Pradeep	Kapoor	Institute of Town Planners India
Bruce	Stiftel	Planners4ClimateAction & Global Planning Educators Group
Fazle Reza	Sumon	Bangladesh Institute of Planners
Reijeli	Taylor	Fiji Institute of Planners
Mazrina	Khalid	Malaysia Institute of Planners
Carol	Archer	University of Technology Jamaica
Carolyn	Trench-Sandiford	Belize Association of Planners
Arvind	Dookhun	Mauritius Association of Planners
Fawcett	Komollo	Kenya Institute of Planners
Charity	Kalombo	Zambia Institute of Planners
Kelley	Moore	Canadian Institute of Planners

### Appendix 3: Rapid Planning Toolkit (RPT) IPAG feedback and recommendations

Theme	Key Insights / Feedback	Key Tensions Identified	Recommendations / Actions
1. Fast-tracking Inclusive Planning	Strong endorsement of rapid, structured planning + participatory approaches. Emphasis on co-design, early engagement, community-led mapping, and iterative cycles. Local governance critical for legitimacy.	Speed vs legitimacy, risk of tokenism, elite capture, weak facilitation.	Embed structured participation models (input/output/exchange). Strengthen facilitation capacity. Use community-generated data. Prioritise short, iterative planning cycles over long processes.
2. Governance & Institutional Alignment	Planning often disconnected from implementation due to national-level control and fragmented governance.	Local empowerment vs national constraints.	Strengthen multi-level governance coordination. Align planning with delivery and budgeting cycles.
3. Planning vs City Management	Need to balance long-term planning with real-time responses to shocks and stresses.	Strategic vs operational tension.	Integrate adaptive planning and city management functions. Enable flexible, responsive planning systems.
4. Integration of Land, Housing, Services & Livelihoods	Strong consensus: fragmentation is a major failure. Planning must treat systems as integrated settlement packages.	Complexity vs implementability.	Embed integrated spatial frameworks linking tenure, housing, infrastructure, and livelihoods. Promote walkable, mixed-use neighbourhoods.
5. Informality & Inclusion	Informality is central but often excluded. Community knowledge provides critical insights.	Formal systems vs lived realities.	Integrate informal systems into planning. Support incremental tenure security. Avoid displacement of livelihoods.
6. Data, Tools & Technology	Data gaps (cadastral, base maps) are widespread. Strong support for real-time, low-cost tools (GIS, drones, participatory mapping).	Simplicity vs capability.	Define minimum viable data standards. Promote low-cost tools (satellite, drones). Enable crowdsourced and community data systems.
7. Toolkit Design & Usability	RPT seen as accessible, practical, and globally relevant, especially in low-capacity contexts.	Simplicity vs technical depth.	Simplify language and steps. Introduce memorable frameworks. Provide visual summaries and templates. Include guidance for low-data contexts.
8. Participation Models & Legitimacy	Participation must go beyond consultation. Cultural context shapes inclusivity.	Risk of exclusion and superficial engagement.	Apply multi-layered participation strategies. Introduce advocacy roles for underrepresented groups. Strengthen co-production approaches.
9. Capacity Building (Core Strength)	Strong consensus on “train-through-doing”. Toolkit enables learning via practice.	Traditional training vs embedded learning.	Formalise learning-by-doing model (induction → fieldwork → mapping → draft plan → iteration). Develop People’s Guides and quick-start tools.

10. Cross-sector & Multi-disciplinary Collaboration	Planning requires integration across land, infrastructure, climate, finance, and communities.	Institutional silos vs integration.	Establish cross-sector working groups. Use RPT as a coordination platform. Enable transdisciplinary action groups.
11. Commonwealth Network Role	Seen as a key enabler for peer learning, scaling, and capacity building.	Uneven capacity and power imbalances.	Develop Communities of Practice, knowledge repositories, and multi-country pilots. Establish a Rapid Planning Academy.
12. Implementation Barriers	Major constraints: outdated legislation, national control, weak enforcement.	Policy vs practice gap.	Advocate for policy reform. Strengthen local implementation authority.
13. Climate, Resilience & Nature Integration	RPT has potential but lacks depth in climate risk, resilience, and biodiversity frameworks.	Gap between planning and resilience systems.	Integrate Sendai Framework, Kunming-Montreal, and resilience tools. Embed risk-informed planning and nature-based solutions.
14. Community Ownership & Co-production	Co-production identified as foundational to legitimacy and success.	Top-down vs bottom-up planning.	Embed co-design processes throughout. Build long-term trust and ownership.
15. Scaling & Replicability	RPT seen as a global operating model, particularly for low-capacity cities.	Context specificity vs scalability.	Scale through pilot programs, case-based learning, and peer exchange systems.
16. Additional Innovations & Ideas	New ideas emerged: spatial budgeting, digital tools, education at school level, diaspora linkages.	Innovation vs feasibility.	Pilot spatial budgets linked to fiscal planning. Develop mobile planning tools. Support early planning education.



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