

# Lessons Learned Document

Defining Africa's Emerging Urban Agenda

P121026

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**State of the Cities in Africa Project**

**Lessons Learned Report**

**2010-2014**

**Financed by Cities Alliance**

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**Defining Africa's Emerging Urban Agenda**

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## **1. Introduction**

The reality of Africa's urban transition is no longer in dispute. The rate of urbanization in sub-Saharan Africa is widely recognized as the most rapid in the world. The proportion of Africans living in urban areas is variously estimated to increase to 46% by 2020 (UN-Habitat, 2001), 52% in 2025 (Njoh, 2003) and 53% by 2030 (African Union, 2006). According to UNESA (2012) over 300 million people on the continent currently live in urban centres. There is a widespread and growing understanding that for urban residents to have access to clean water, decent shelter and reliable sanitation, local government systems must plan for growth and attract resources to enable delivery. Despite the mounting pressures caused by rapid urbanisation, many countries remain with post-colonial regulatory regimes or altogether lack systems for sustainable urban management.

With the above in mind the State of Cities in Africa (SOCA) Project was initiated to address the demand for information and support from cities and practitioners in order to systematically define urban systems in Africa. The SOCA Project was one attempt to respond to the demand for information by building relationships with universities, local governments, national government and other durable civil society institutions to research, analyse and compare current data on African cities in order to improve service delivery.

To date there have been a number of research projects funded by UN Agencies and donors on narrow aspects of urbanisation in African cities but there has not been a coherent effort led by national and local governments on the nature of urbanisation in African cities. This project distinguished itself by anchoring its implementation and institutional foundation in centres of higher education which are responsible for training the next generation of urban managers and practitioners.

The SOCA Project was hosted by the African Centre for Cities (ACC) at the University of Cape Town. The ACC was established in 2007 and from its inception the mission of the ACC has been to facilitate critical urban research in the global South from an African perspective. The ACC continues to pursue this mission by combining applied and academic by conducting these activities across five geographic scales:

- The University of Cape Town
- The Cape Town City Region
- The Republic of South Africa

- The African Continent and
- The Global South

The SOCA Project has been one of a several Africa focused projects hosted by the ACC. The other project of significance is the Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS). AAPS is a voluntary, peer-to-peer network of African institutions which educate and train urban and regional planners founded in 1999. The membership of AAPS represents all regions of the continent. This network formed the backbone of the SOCA Project in that it provided an established and well organised pool of candidates for participation in the SOCA Project.

## **2. Document Objective**

The purpose of the lessons learned document is to capture the implementation experience of the SOCA Project and to document the learning gained from project design and implementation in a formal document for use by others in similar complex research projects on African cities. This document will share knowledge about the experience of developing and implementing a research project that is continental in scope and requires broad stakeholder participation. Specifically the document will highlight challenges with the aim of promoting the recurrence of desirable outcomes and learning how to mitigate undesirable outcomes in similar projects.

## **3. Project Description**

The State of the Cities (SOCA) Project hosted by the African Centre for Cities (ACC) at the University of Cape Town was initiated in 2008 in response to the expressed need for data and contemporary knowledge on Africa's urban systems. With an initial time horizon of 10 years, the SOCA Project is an ambitious effort to engage with urban stakeholders on a country by country basis in order to:

- Holistically document conditions and trends in national urban systems across the African continent
- Build the capacity of the next generation of urban practitioners by incorporating findings from the research and development process into built environment training curricula
- Develop a sustainable virtual urban knowledge network that can be accessed by urban practitioners across the continent

The SOCA Project was intended as a catalytic partner whose role is to facilitate relationship building and resource mobilisation on a national scale for the purpose of supporting a process driven dialogue and approach to addressing knowledge gaps and limited data availability. In its first three years of operation the SOCA Project worked with coalitions of urban stakeholders that include national governments, local government associations and urban civil society organisations to create a shared vision on importance of urbanisation and its potential benefits for national development. The achievement of these milestones was envisioned by pursuing the following project objectives:

- a) Developing demand driven baseline reports on urban systems on a country by country basis.
- b) Building skills and capacity in the sector locally by incorporating research findings into built environment training programmes at host institutions.
- c) Fostering regional knowledge and information exchanges amongst the SOCA project countries in order to enable peer learning.

The role of the ACC is to act as project secretariat providing technical and advisory support for the implementation of the SOCA Project and the publication of a baseline State of Cities reports. The organizing principal of the SOCA Project is that within national institutions of higher learning there is a wealth of technical expertise and knowledge on urbanization and its consequences. SOCA differs from other urban research projects in the following ways:

First, it was to be hosted by a local university with a built environment programme or research institution focused on urban issues. Linking the project with durable knowledge institutions was aimed at ensuring that the research undertaken and its recommendations are not forgotten once the research process is concluded. Instead, training institutions committed to incorporating the research and data assembled in the SOCA Project into the training curricula.

Second, the work of research, data assembly and analysis was to be undertaken by local experts and scholars with whom local and national governments are able to engage in an on-going dialogue on urbanization, policy options and application challenges. This approach acknowledged the wealth of technical expertise that is locally available and with that a careful understanding of barriers to effective policy implementation. Using this method, the SOCA Project aimed to not only utilize existing knowledge networks but explicitly requires that opportunities for building additional capacity in the sector be exploited to their full potential.

Third and critically, SOCA project partners through their participation undertook to join and actively contribute to a larger continental venture to build and grow an urban knowledge network focused on African cities. This network which is web-based will enable urban practitioners, scholars and policy makers to share information, research and tools which enhance the work of building productive and well-functioning cities.

### *3.1 Establishment of Project Management Unit at the ACC*

The establishment of a project secretariat responsible for the administration and management of the SOCA Project was initiated in April 2010 upon the award of a grant from the Cities Alliance to the value of US\$498, 000. The staffing of the secretariat began with the recruitment of a full time project coordinator. The project coordinator worked in conjunction with the full time ACC finance manager and a part time administrative staff with skills in project management and financial management.

The first phase of the SOCA Project was implemented 2010-2013 resulting in the establishment of a project management unit at the ACC structured to support on-going SOCA implementation in partner countries. The following milestones were planned and delivered:

- Scoping studies completed in four countries
- Establishment of a project advisory board
- Processing and evaluation of expression of interests from applicant universities for the Project
- Initiating contact with selected universities and organizing field visits
- Developing an operational manual to guide project implementation
- Support the design of a virtual network for urban practitioners and policy makers in project countries with a vision for continental reach
- Facilitated and participated in national consultations in two countries
- Mobilised additional resources for peer learning amongst SOCA partner countries with the support of external agencies including the South African Cities Network and the Brazilian Ministry of Cities
- Organised a regional capacity building forum for SOCA country partners
- Carried out technical assistance and field visits to support country teams in articulating demand for SOCA Project
- Prepared and submitted funding proposals for the preparation of State of Cities projects in three countries

The next section provides detail on the country level activities in the countries selected to participate in the SOCA project.

### *3.2 Country level activities – First Round 2010-2012*

In the first round of the SOCA Project, expressions of interest were received and evaluated from the following universities and countries:

<b><i>Institution</i></b>	<b><i>City</i></b>	<b><i>Country</i></b>
Department of Planning, University of Nairobi	Nairobi	Kenya
Department of Planning, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology	Kumasi	Ghana
Institute of Urban Development, Ethiopian Civil Service	Addis	Ethiopia

University	Ababa	
Department of Planning and Architecture, University of Botswana	Gaborone	Botswana

Given that Kenya was still rebounding from the urban violence related to its most recent election, it was decided to revisit its participation in future rounds.

### *3.2.1 Botswana*

Initiated in September 2010, the partnership with the University of Botswana's Department of Architecture and Planning made Botswana the first country selected for participation in the SOCA Project. Botswana was a particularly interesting case because although it has a small population, it is overwhelmingly concentrated in urbanised centres and rapidly urbanising villages. Yet there is no acknowledgement in policy or practice of the way migration and urbanisation are changing this middle income nation. Through the AAPS network, the University of Botswana responded to a call for expressions of interest for project participation. A scoping study was carried out and it was determined that there was demand and commitment for the project amongst key stakeholders, namely:

- Ministry of Lands and Housing, Department of Town and Regional Planning
- Ministry of Local Government
- Botswana Association of Local Authorities
- Gaborone City Council
- Central Statistical Office
- Department of Surveys and Mapping
- Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis
- Habitat for Humanity – Botswana
- Environmental Watch Botswana/ Somarelang Tikolog
- Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organisations

In order to take the process forward a series of city and town level consultations were undertaken with all urban local authorities in key stakeholders to determine anecdotally how they were impacted by urbanisation, what their data needs were and to what extent their organisations held data on this topic. These fact-finding meetings culminated in a national consultation in May 2011 where the findings were presented. In attendance were

representatives of national and local government as well as international aid agencies. Based on the feedback from this meeting a draft proposal to the Cities Alliance was prepared which articulated the specific nature of urbanisation in Botswana and the data needs of policy makers and urban practitioners. The proposal then underwent a series of revisions. During the period ending 2011, whilst the national ministries involved demonstrated an appetite to pursue the project, unforeseen personnel changes and public sector labour unrest put the activities on hold. The university based partners remained active in sensitising stakeholders about the project and worked to get all the required endorsements from local institutions to host and administer the project. The proposal was finally submitted in the third quarter of 2012. Unfortunately despite meeting all of the criteria for selection, this proposal was not well received in part because as middle income country, one pervasive view is that it could self-fund the research. In addition, Botswana because of its relatively small population did not present an attractive case for funding. The activities in Botswana were formally ended in October 2013 when the Cities Alliance secretariat indicated its intention to terminate funding to the overall programme.

In Botswana, one major challenge to fully developing the project was the absence of a major urban sector development programme. While several bilateral and multilateral donors are active in Botswana it is limited to the environmental, transport and capacity building sectors. Urban development is completely unrepresented on the development agenda in Botswana despite the fact that the 2001 census estimated an urbanisation rate of 52.9 % and by 2021, the Central Statistics Office has projected the figure will exceed 60%. (GOB 1997). For this reason a significant amount of time had to be devoted to working with the World Bank and the UN regionally to attain support. Financially this was not possible, but a no objection was received allowing the proposal to be finalised and submitted to the Cities Alliance.

### *3.2.2 Ghana*

The Department of Planning at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Ghana was also selected to participate in the first round of the SOCA Project based on an application received through the AAPS network. Unlike in other partner countries, the KNUST was not in the capital Accra but in the secondary city of Kumasi. It is mentioned because it did have bearing on project implementation. Significantly in Ghana,

the Cities Alliance, the primary funder, had already established a large programmatic pipeline under the Land, Services and Citizenship (LSC) programme co-funded with Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and GIZ. The funding envelope for the LSC programme was US\$4 million. The LSC programme agreement was signed off in late 2010 had not been launched at the time of the SOCA Project began its work in October 2010. It was thought the SOCA Project and the LSC programme could be complimentary as the LSC programme was primarily Accra focused. The LSC programme had a secretariat in the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and the SOCA Project was directed to engage with donor partners and the government through this committee.

In Ghana the decision was taken to submit a preparatory grant for the State of Ghanaian Cities Project (SGCP) in order to fund the consultation work that would be needed prior to developing proposals for a project design, hosting a national work shop to ensure consensus on the project and submitting a request for funding. The key stakeholders consulted in preparation for delivery of the SOCA Project included the following:

- Urban Development Unit in the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
- National Planning and Development Commission
- Institute for Local Government Studies
- Ghana People's Housing Dialogue (an Slum Dwellers International affiliate)
- Town and Country Planning Department in the Ministry of Science & Environment.

Unfortunately unlike in other SOCA countries, the national local government agency, NALAG was not functioning and could not be relied upon to assist with liaising with local authorities. Individual contact had to be made directly with local authorities. This ultimately impacted on the efficacy of the project team in carrying out the initial consultations.

The preparatory grant proposal was prepared and submitted in early 2012. It was only responded to by the funder in early 2013. Therefore an entire year went by with no activity. Once the funds were received there was a great deal of effort put in reconnecting with the aforementioned stakeholders and assessing their appetite and level of interest in the proposed SGCP. The need to revisit the awareness raising phase of the project meant that resources aimed at organizing and carrying out consultations with urban stakeholders in 10 regions was now redirected in part to developing awareness about the project and confirming demand

given that one year had lapsed since initial discussion. In addition to this unplanned set of activities, project implementation was also heavily affected by foreign currency fluctuations over the 12 month period between the time of proposal submission and grant award. Due to this factor the budget effectively shrunk and the work programme agreed in advance, remained the same. The challenge became that work had to be done with funds that did not cover all the required tasks. This created strain in the relationship between the KNUST and the ACC. The project team in Ghana comprised of two staff members from KNUST based in Kumasi and a consultant based in Accra worked diligently to undertake all consultations taking care to include civil society, local government, and representatives of other Ghanaian universities to make the process as inclusive as possible. In retrospect, it was not clear when planning how important the interpersonal and face to face communications would be in Ghana. This differed markedly from other contexts where either all stakeholders were co-located or the other forms of communication such as broadcast emails would be adequate to ensure broad participation. In Ghana much more interpersonal communication was required in order to confirm arrangements, get partnership dialogues underway. This had a cost that was not anticipated. Having received the grant funding in mid-2013, project the team worked into early 2014 to complete the regional consultants. Unfortunately the work was not continued based on the funding decision to terminate the SOCA Project.

### *3.2.3 Ethiopia*

The SOCA Project in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was a late addition to the first round of the SOCA Project. However demonstrated commitment by central government to urban development programming made Ethiopia a strong candidate for the project.

Recognising the scale of urban poverty and the infrastructure needs of the urban poor, the Government of Ethiopia (GOE) in 2010 announced the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) 2011-15 through which it plans to leverage the growth of cities for national development. Building on the success of the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) which enabled the GOE to achieve significant reductions in the number of households living in poverty, the objectives of the GTP included:

- A projected average growth of the industrial sector of 21% per annum
- A projected 11% minimum overall economic growth
- Extending the coverage and quality of health and education services
- Creating and strengthening a stable democratic and developmental government and

- Supporting a conducive environment for the continuing national capacity building

The host institution, the Institute of Urban Development Studies at the Ethiopian Civil Service University based in Addis Ababa was identified through the AAPS network. A scoping study was carried out in 2010 and it was determined that there was sufficient demand for the project amongst key stakeholders including the following:

- Policy, Research and Planning Bureau , Ministry of Urban Development, Construction and Housing
- Ethiopian Cities Association
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ)
- World Bank
- Canadian Urban Institute

The GOE has a significant and growing urban portfolio at the time the SOCA Project was launch. Already in place were two urban programmes administered by Cities Alliance members—the World Bank and GIZ. The World Bank has been active in Ethiopia since 2002 providing support for civil service reform through a capacity building programme to strengthen the performance of the public sector with an emphasis on urban management. At the request of the GOE, the World Bank has supported the implementation of the Capacity Building for Decentralized Service Delivery (CBDSD) project in 2002 followed by the Public Sector Capacity Building Program (PSCAP) in 2004. As a result significant analytical work on urban growth in Addis Ababa had been carried out. Further work had been completed on the water sector and upgrading two issues key to urban conditions in other growing urban centres. This existing body of data and research was envisaged to serve as a useful starting point for compiling data on urbanisation in Ethiopia. The second Cities Alliance member active in Ethiopia in the urban sector at the time was GIZ which had initiated its work programme in 1995. The GIZ programme focused on three main areas:

- Sustainable Land Management Program (SLM)
- Urban Governance and Decentralisation Program (UGDP)
- Engineering Capacity Building Program (ECBP)

In addition GIZ has supported the MUDCH with two other key urban projects namely the establishment of the Ethiopian Cities Association (formerly the Ethiopian Cities Network). The ECA is a membership based organisation of the nation's 27 largest cities. GIZ and the

Cities Alliance had also collaborated on the creation of an integrated urban database to be managed by the ECA. The database project was designed to collect, organise and analyse primary data as a means of identifying data gaps.

The World Bank and GIZ were also collaborating on the Urban Local Government Development Project (ULGDP) approved in 2008. The main goal of the ULGDP was to improve the quality of municipal services and infrastructure in urban local authorities. The total value of the project loan was US\$150 million in IDA credits. In addition the World Bank has financed an extension of the Public Sector Capacity Building Programme (PSCAP) enabling the project to close in 2012, three years beyond the original closing date. The IDA credit valued at US\$50 million. Both projects included technical advisory services as well as research that could be used to inform the scope and breadth of the SOCA Project in Ethiopia.

Given the strong support for urban research and analytical work by central government, the consultations in Ethiopia quickly proceeded to discussions on geographical coverage, institutional arrangements and fund raising activities. It was agreed at the outset the ECSU would host the project on behalf of the ministry. To that end a formal MOU was developed and signed. A project steering committee was also assembled in order to give direction on the:

- a) Selection of the cities to be included in a baseline State of the Ethiopian Cities Report
- b) Composition of the project steering committee
- c) Composition and location of the project implementation unit
- d) project timeline and
- e) Composition of a national project reference group.

Following its formal selection as a country partner, a proposal for funding of the State of Ethiopian Cities Project was developed. The methodology in this case differed slightly from Botswana in that an external consultant was employed to assist the ECSU and Ministry to complete the application process. This proved valuable as this enabled Ethiopia based urban specialists to engage in skills transfer with the university based project team. The proposal was completed in and submitted in 2011. Following a series of delays on the side of the funder, the grant was awarded in 2012. With a 24 month window the team at the ECSU set to work. At present the work is still ongoing.

### 3.2.4 *Tanzania*

The case of how Tanzania came to be part of the SOCA Project differs markedly from the others. Although Ardhi University was originally selected by the ACC to be in the first cohort of scoping studies for the SOCA Project, at the same time the Tanzanian Cities Network (TACINE) independently submitted a proposal for the State of the Tanzanian Cities Report to the Cities Alliance. The grant for US\$250,000 was awarded in July 2010. Aware of the ACC's efforts, the Cities Alliance encouraged TACINE to work with School of Urban and Regional Planning (SURP) at Ardhi University much in line with ACC model to ensure there is a capacity building component. TACINE prepared an MOU with Ardhi University to formalize the scope of cooperation. As TACINE was leading the implementation of the State of Tanzanian Cities Project, the ACC played a more advisory role.

The main objectives of the State of Tanzanian Cities Project were:

- 1) Create a baseline system for Cities upon which future progress will be monitored;
- 2) Provide Benchmarks of performance of cities against one another;
- 3) Facilitate capacity building of participating cities;
- 4) provide a comprehensive assessment of the forces that drive urban change;
- 5) Review the impact of government policies on cities;
- 6) Examine the challenges facing cities as well as the opportunities.

Key stakeholders assembled by TACINE for the State of the Tanzanian Cities Project include:

- Prime Minister's Office – Regional Administration and Local Government of Tanzania (PMO-RALG)
- Ministry of Lands and Human Settlement
- Office of the President of Zanzibar
- UN Habitat – Regional Office for Africa and Arab States
- German Development Service (DED)
- World Bank Tanzania Country Office

TACINE adopted a very different approach to the project by foregrounding the role of local authorities as researchers and relying on the university team to document the process. In

October 2011, TACINE held a national launch for the project in Dar es Salaam. While TACINE was advised by the World Bank and the ACC that the proposed methodology significantly different from the approach in other countries and may result in data that is not comparable with other countries, no changes to the approach were made. In 2012 a process was initiated whereby local government officials were identified by TACINE to form part of the project team. These officials participated in a series of trainings with experts from ARDHI University to develop data collection tools and train as data collectors. By October 2012 data collection was started. In 2013 the structure of the report was revised based on data collected and a zero draft of the report was prepared for edits and revisions. As of June 2014, a draft manuscript has been prepared however it still requires major revisions and the entire grant allocated to TACINE has been exhausted. To address this issue, the ACC has in collaboration with TACINE developed a concept note to undertake the final stages of report preparation and publication. The concept note has been shared with the original sponsors of the project however additional funds have not been confirmed. The ACC is continuing to motivate to the Cities Alliance for the additional resources needed to bring the project to completion in advance of AFRICITIES 2015.

### *3.3 Country level activities – Second Round 2012-2013*

At the end of 2012, a second call for expressions of interest for participation in the SOCA Project was prepared and disseminated. The documents were distributed via the AAPS network, the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa and the Association pour la Promotion de l'Enseignement et de la Recherche en Aménagement et Urbanisme (APERAU) – the French Association of Urban Planning Schools. Applications were received from the University of Malawi, Makerere University in Uganda and the Development Workshop in Angola.

In the beginning of 2013 the participation of the above countries was confirmed and work to mobilise resources for the necessary scoping studies was undertaken. In Malawi, GIZ made available funds for the scoping study. With the GIZ funds, a consultant team was hired to undertake the scoping study to determine the level of demand for a State of Malawian Cities Project and the availability of the data to produce such research. The main stakeholders identified in Malawi included:

- Ministry of Local Government

- Ministry of Lands and Housing
- Malawian Local Government Association
- Malawian Institute of Physical Planners
- Urban Research Institute
- UN-Habitat Malawi Office

The report was presented at a roundtable held in October 2013. The ACC had been advised in preparation for the roundtable that the World Bank intended to undertake an Urbanization Review in Malawi and that funding would no longer be made available from the Cities Alliance to pursue the SOCA project. Following the roundtable all country partners were advised and activities came to an end.

In Angola, the Development Workshop, a leading research centre in the field of urban development, put forth an expression of interest. The SOCA Project considered this application because of the organisation's strong track record of urban research and existing relationships with central and local government. The Development Workshop already had available funds to provide as counter funding for a grant request to the Cities Alliance. The Development Workshop requested the ACC to support the preparation of an application and securing the required endorsements. The proposal was prepared in September 2013 however due to the wind down of the SOCA Project; the ACC has not been involved in the submission of the request.

Finally as there were no locally available funds in Uganda to undertake the scoping study, the work programme was not initiated.

### *3.4 Networked Urban Knowledge*

The final component of the SOCA Project was the establishment of a platform to enhance urban knowledge amongst urban policy makers, practitioners and scholars in African cities. At the outset this was imagined as a membership based organization or a forum where users might pose questions and receive answers. However after several months of design and development, it became clear that a platform could be created with a broader purpose.

#### *3.4.1 - UrbanAfrica.Net*

The UrbanAfrica.Net knowledge portal was designed to be a digital entry point for knowledge sharing, interactive exchange and information dissemination on urbanisation in Africa and will create an unprecedented knowledge bridge between African scholars, policy makers and urban practitioners. The main objectives of the UrbanAfrica.Net knowledge portal are to:

- Systematically tracking the contributions of urban development knowledge generators / creators and their knowledge consumers
- Add to the existing pool of development knowledge in a collaborative way
- Provide an easily accessible interface for meaningful interaction between development experts and development partners / clients
- Building collaborative intelligence

Because of its links to the SOCA Project, it was envisaged that the portal would also provide access to city level data sets. However as the pace of the SOCA Project slowed, other content was identified and now represents the bulk of the site's offering. All of the site's content focuses on the following major themes in urban development:

- Built Environment
- Culture
- Economy
- Governance
- Human Right
- Infrastructure and
- Sustainability

#### **4. Key Project Successes**

In the course of project implementation, there have been some significant project achievements. Among them were the peer learning and knowledge coproduction activities that were aligned to the third activity of the SOCA Project, creating a knowledge network.

##### *4.1 WBI South-South Knowledge Exchange – Video Conferences Series*

The ACC was able to rise additional funding to support a peer learning activity from the World Bank Institute early on in the project. The purpose was to find a cost effective way to connect SOCA country based partners with each other and resources persons with expertise in the State of Cities projects. The video conference series was also initiated to support the creation of a community for knowledge exchange for urban scholars and policy makers that

will be the core audience for the SOCA Project outputs and knowledge products. The section below summarises the topics tabled at each video conference held to date and key actions related to each session.

The first video conference concentrated on the experience of the South African Cities Network, a non-for profit membership based organisation comprised of representatives from the nine largest cities in South Africa as well as the national local government agency and the ministry responsible for local government. The presentation was an overview of the lessons learned and challenges met in preparing the first baseline state of cities report in South Africa. The feedback from the participants was that meeting was very useful particularly because they felt they could freely ask questions and received full answers.

The second video conference in the series had the purpose of exploring the experience of preparing a state of cities report from the perspective of a government ministry and its partner agencies in Brazil. The meeting again had the full participation of the country teams. The main topics of discussion included the methodology of the report as well as data challenges and remedies. As the State of Cities team in Brazil was led by the Ministry of Cities, one of the areas of difference with the South African experience was the high premium based on government generated data. In particular, the contribution of the network of agencies responsible for the collection and analysis of city level data was highly valued and not subject to the scrutiny that government generated data was in South Africa. Another key point of difference between the South African and the Brazilian experiences were the ability of the Ministry of Cities to draw in other federal institutions into the preparation process. By contrast in the South African case, a small team was led by seasoned experts but without affiliation to central government. The Brazilian team also emphasised that their approach was guided by methodology above all else and this helped them to shape the type of output that was achieved. The Brazilian team also shared its challenges which included access to the most current data because of timing of the study.

The third and final scheduled video conference was held. The theme for this meeting was collaborative research amongst the SOCA country teams. The teams used this session to prepare abstracts on the theme of data availability in African cities. The agreed topics for the collaborative research are as follows:

- Ghana and Botswana – Data availability on municipal finance in non-primate/ secondary cities in Botswana and Ghana
- Tanzania and Ethiopia –Data availability of urban productivity in Tanzania and Ethiopia.

#### *4.2 September 2012 SOCA Regional Capacity Building Meeting*

In addition to the virtual support that the ACC was able to provide project partners an effort was also made to bring them together. In September 2012 the SOCA Project held its first face to face meeting with project partners in Cape Town, South Africa. The purpose of the meeting was to support networking and capacity building at a regional level amongst project teams. The teams have been with the support of the already benefited from regular meetings with each other using video conferencing technology but this workshop will present the first opportunity to have contact. The agenda for the workshop included presentations by each country team on their progress and challenges to the group as well as to receive some technical advice in the area of data collection which was consistently raised during previous video conference meetings.

The feedback from this regional meeting confirmed the importance of ensuring that project participants are not only receivers of knowledge but also given the opportunity to share their own. As the team from Tanzania had independently received its own funding, it was more advanced in the implementation process than other teams. Sharing their particular experience and lessons with newer team members was invaluable. Participants strongly recommended that this feature of the SOCA Project be repeated as it helped team members to make connections with colleagues in similar contexts with relevant advice.

#### *4.3 UrbanAfrica.Net*

UrbanAfrica.Net has been operational since 2012. It continues to offer well researched, curated and organised contemporary information on African Cities. One of its achievements had been an urban reporting series which has covered the following cities to date:

- |          |                |                 |
|----------|----------------|-----------------|
| • Lagos  | • Tunis        | • Dar es Salaam |
| • Luanda | • Johannesburg | • Kinshasa      |

- Cairo
- Abuja
- Gulu
- Accra
- Cape Town
- Kampala
- Banjul

In addition the site has effectively used social media channels to extend its presence. In 2014, the number of visitors to the UrbanAfrica.Net Facebook page varies between 4,500 and 7,200 users per month. This has in part been a result of efforts to partner with other urban content producers ensuring that the site has a strong profile. Some of the partnerships that have been entered into with other platforms focused on urban themes include Future Cape Town, The Cairo Observer and the Global Urbanist. The site has also commissioned 40 book reviews on titles related to urbanism in Africa by authors who write on a volunteer basis.

The site has a great deal of potential but irregular funding is a challenge that the team is faced with. Although a number of contributors are prepared to work with UrbanAfrica.net on a voluntary basis, a consistent flow of resources will contribute to continued incremental and organic growth.

## **5. Project Challenges**

### *Project Administration*

Bureaucratic and demanding requirements on the part of donor meant that 50% of the capacity available in the Project Secretariat at the ACC was dedicated to the reporting and liaising with funders rather than providing technical support to project partners. Whilst the funder has since change institutional locations which may bring about less cumbersome reporting and application requirements, these proved challenging in this instance.

Included in the difficulties of administering the project was the slow pace of engagement on the part of the funder. Having started the project in 2010, it was very disappointing to observe the delays in responding to funding proposals and communications from project teams by the funder. It lead to misunderstandings between the ACC and country based partners who in some instances came to believe that the ACC was receiving funds on their behalf and not distributing it onward for project activities. The delays also soured the enthusiasm of project partners beyond the universities who had committed resources to project preparation

meetings and document preparation only to find that months went by without any decisive feedback from the funders.

### *Turnover at Partner Institutions*

One area that impacted the speed at which the project unfolded was the staff turnover experienced at partner institutions in project countries. Changes in staffing occurred both inside and outside of government, requiring the SOCA Project staff and local partners to spend significant time engaging with the new people at stakeholder institutions, and demonstrating the existing demand for the project as well as the potential benefits. In the case of Ethiopia, the head of the Policy, Research and Planning Bureau, Ministry of Urban Development, Construction and Housing has changed three times since the scoping study. There has been similar turnover in Botswana as well. While these changes are not unexpected, they did force the project teams to repeat some steps in the project preparation process, using up time and resources.

### *Shift in Government Priorities*

This issue took to forms in the implementation of the SOCA Project. First there were at different times short periods during project implementation when key partners were not available to participate or contribute to the process. Some examples are local elections or public sector strikes. While elections are predictable, they did take the attention of key partners namely officials in local authorities from whom data was to be obtained. With regard to labour unrest in the public sector, this affected by government officials as well as university officials who are public servants. These disruptions both scheduled and otherwise contributed to loss of project momentum and project teams had to redouble their efforts in order to get activities back on track.

More critically during the period of project implementation, some partners being weary of the pace of implementation began to explore other means of assembling the required data. One example of this was the decision by the MUDCH to consent to the World Bank Urban team to undertake an urbanisation review of Ethiopia. The urbanisation review is an analytical product of the urban anchor aimed at using quantitative analysis to identify the key binding constraints to sustained urban development at a country level. The review intends to provide

an overarching frame of reference to highlight priority areas coupled with policy advice on ways to manage the urbanisation process. The reviews are carried out through short term consultancies. This differed from the SOCA Project which aimed to embed the process in an institution of higher education and use local expertise to assemble and analyse data in order to support effective policy implementation. With the support of the Cities Alliance and DFID, the World Bank has already completed reviews in Uganda and Vietnam. The World Bank has confirmed its intention to undertake reviews in Tanzania, Ethiopia, Ghana, Senegal and South Africa. Although discussions were held at length with key stakeholders to ensure that the complementarity of the research projects was understood, they have been perceived as duplicative.

### *Selective urban programming in Africa*

For Botswana a major contributing factor to the difficulty in getting the work programme formally launched was the fact that there were no large scale government or donor programmes focused on local government or the urbanization. The Swedish Association for Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) and the Siemens Foundation had small scale activities working in niche programming related to local government in Botswana. The absence of an existing “coalition of the willing” made the project to promote. This was in spite of the growing urbanisation issues being faced by local and national government in Botswana as well as the presence of strong data collection and record keeping by authorities. Botswana does not have cities that fit the “mega-city” typology and thus was deemed less significant by funders.

## **6. Lessons Learned**

The section below summarises the key lessons learned in the implementation and premature closure of the SOCA Project.

**Lesson Learned #1- A Project Design That Relies Heavily On External Agencies For Successful Implementation Should Be Approached With Caution** - The SOCA Project was a very ambitious project designed to be implemented over a decade of continuous financial and programmatic support from the primary funder and its member organisations. During the course of implementation of Phase One the financial and programmatic support

that was confirmed during the proposal preparation process was not sustained. Bilateral and multilateral agencies which had been approached for endorsement of the SOCA Project from the outset were unable or unwilling to provide consistent support during the implementation phase of the project. The type of support envisioned during the preparatory stages which did not materialise included:

- Introductions to field based donor agency staff to facilitate building of local urban networks where they did not exist
- Access to urban project data despite upfront agreements to facilitate access programmatic resources such as reports and data in order to ensure robust analysis of urban challenges in project countries
- Participation in country level activities such as the roundtables or national workshops on urban research related to the SOCA Project.
- Regular communications on urban sector work in partner countries. Often SOCA project staff stumbled on urban project activities or outputs that may have been well aligned or clashed with the SOCA Project without any guidance from the implementing agencies which were also project donors.

What was learned in this case, is that when a significant and sustained role is given to external agencies which impacts the legitimacy, funding and operations of the project, it becomes vulnerable to circumstances beyond the control of the implementing agency. The ACC as the host to this ambitious project, was not empowered to fully manage the project resources, timelines or deliverables. The ACC acted as a hub in a network of actors –funding organisations, research institutions , NGOs, universities and government agencies. These different entities while enthusiastic at project conception did not maintain a consistent position in relation to the project over time. While committing to programmatic funding was a new venture for our primary funder, more support is needed in future to ensure that the project is not compromised by changing priorities.

**Lesson Learned #2 –Relationships Matter and Must Be Recognised As Central to Project Implementation-** A key lesson from the implementation of phase one of the SOCA Project, was that the project implementation process was more complex and resource intensive than originally believed. Unlike other donor funded research projects, the SOCA Project was designed to be anchored by a learning institution and supported by a working coalition of stakeholders from across the urban sector in order to foster a wider dialogue on

urbanisation at country level. The preparation work required in order to successfully mobilise a “coalition of the willing” required significantly more time and resources than articulated in the original design of phase one. In order to effectively establish a working urban stakeholder coalition, where one does not already exist, time and effort must be invested to achieve the following outcomes:

- Shared understanding of the project goals and objectives
- Commitment to the methodology which foregrounds the role of local tertiary institutions and expertise in developing and stewarding the SOCA Project into existence
- Trust and confidence of project partners in each other as well as ACC

The work of coalition building was largely under resourced as it was never articulated a distinct deliverable although without it the work of the SOCA Project could not go forward. Relationship management was also key to managing the expectations and where needed absorbing the frustrations of our country based partners. In a continental project the work could not proceed effectively without nurturing trust and commitment from all partners. The ACC was well positioned to do this given its interdisciplinary work and its connections across the academic and policy environment. The lesson learned is that in course of preparation for the SOCA Project, process intensive activities that take place over time and with a variety of actors to create an enabling environment for the project must be valued in the same way as research, workshops and reports which are often the measure of project delivery.

### **Lesson Learned #3 –Single Donor Funding Can Restrict Or Even Undermine Project**

**Progress** – The third lesson from the SOCA Project was that dependence on a single donor for the majority of project funding was not desirable. Particularly given the bureaucratic requirements of the Cities Alliance while based in a lending institution, the administration burden and delays created great difficulties in implementation. Smaller grants from alternative sources during the same period enabled the ACC to be responsive to the needs of our country based partners. It has also enabled the ACC to push forward with the innovative portions of the project such as the urban knowledge portal. Although the SOCA Project was using research activities as a tool for advocacy and policy dialogue, it is worth considering how to involve the private sector. Urban spaces are sites of economic activity and therefore it may be possible to identify for profit entities that have an interest in urban research. A broader range of funding partners can strengthen delivery and project focus.

**Lesson Learned #4 – One Size Never Fits All** - The SOCA project in some ways attempted to replicate a model developed and applied in a South African context following the publication of the 2004 State of South African Cities Report. This baseline report succeeded in influencing the national debates on urbanisation. While the approach was adjusted to be operational in environments without the same levels of resources available and capacities the implementation required more flexibility. The environment in each of the project countries varied substantial from the South African experience and each other. While perhaps not possible using the financial instruments available through the Cities Alliance, an approach for future research should take into account that the design and criteria that work in one environment will not always work in another. Working without time pressure to disburse grant monies, it may have been possible for teams to work in a more consistent and incremental way that matched their vision for the State of Cities Project and acknowledged their circumstances. The 2004 South African State of Cities Report was the product of years of dialogue, relationship building and financial investment. Replicating the outcome requires greater nuances in the design and implementation to make it work for the specific context.

**Lesson Learned #4 – Without Sustained Funding the Proposed Project Objectives**

**Cannot Be Attained** – The unilateral decision by the funders of the SOCA Project to terminate funding has meant that much of the analytical and policy work envisioned at the outset of the implementation could not be realised. In the two countries where grants were allocated, namely Tanzania and Ethiopia, to date neither country team has published a final report. They are each in need of ongoing financial and technical support to carry out the task of researching, analysing and reporting on current conditions within their respective urban systems. In order to address this ongoing need, the ACC has requested a close out grant from the Cities Alliance to enable delivery of the baseline reports and the organisation of learning events so that the resources that have been spent thus far yield tangible and far reaching outputs.

The work of the SOCA Project created many opportunities for cross-continental collaboration, south-south learning and helped to identify synergies in urban research at a regional level. However without resources the gains from the preparatory work of the SOCA Project remain unrealised.