

SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE: PUTTING PRINCIPLE INTO PRACTICE

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1: STRATEGIC PLANNING

Infrastructure development decisions should be based on strategic planning that is aligned with global sustainable development agendas and supported by enabling policies, regulations and institutions that facilitate coordination across departments and both national and sub-national levels of government and public administration.

CASE STUDY: APPLICATION OF THE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE GAMBIA

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Organization: United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)

Partners: Government of The Gambia

Donor: African Development Bank



Photo source: UNOPS



Need for infrastructure project/system:

The small West African country of The Gambia faces major challenges to ensure that its rapid urban growth in metropolitan areas is sustainable. Urbanization is creating enormous infrastructure needs, especially in energy and transport. Concurrently, climate change disproportionately impacts more vulnerable communities and exacerbates urban poverty. Considering the long lifespan of infrastructure in cities – often up to a hundred years for buildings, transport systems and water infrastructure – strategic planning is of crucial importance to ensure that the infrastructure built will sustainably meet the country's wide range of needs now and in future.

Local governments are particularly well placed to lead sustainable urban planning and smart, transit-oriented policies given their knowledge of community needs and on-the-ground circumstances. However, they are often

short-staffed and have limited financial resources, restricting their capacity to prioritize projects and plan for long-term development. In The Gambia, government officers are not trained for collecting spatial data and integrating sustainability into urban development plans. As a response to infrastructure and capacity-building needs, UNOPS is currently supporting the Government of The Gambia through the African Development Bank funded Greater Banjul 2040 project alongside three municipal governments in the area. This project aims to create a Digital Master Plan to centralize data and support planning efforts, including a series of five-year investment plans and a list of priority projects. At the same time, the project provides partner institutions with technical assistance to ensure they can manage this new set of data.

Project Description:

UNOPS deployed CAT-I at the inception of the Greater Banjul 2040 project to identify the gaps or bottlenecks that are inhibiting the Gambian Government's ability to plan, deliver and manage sustainable and resilient infrastructure

CAPACITY ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR INFRASTRUCTURE (CAT-I)

CAT-I is a tool developed by UNOPS to help countries plan for sustainable infrastructure development. The tool enables governments to identify gaps in their capacity to plan, deliver and manage their infrastructure systems, and find opportunities to address these gaps at the national, state, city or ministerial level.

The complete framework of the CAT-I tool includes three stages as well as 11 indicators and 90 sub-indicators that consist of around 900 yes/no questions pertaining to economic, social and environmental issues. The application of the tool allowed the project team to define priority areas for technical assistance, including capacity building for government officials on the development and implementation of strategic plans, and enabling municipalities to maximize revenue streams.

Following the CAT-I assessment, UNOPS initially focused on building awareness of sustainable urban planning principles for officers at the national level and at the council level. In order to update the current land use plan that will be part of the future Digital Master Plan for the Greater Banjul Area, UNOPS has organized several focus group discussions on different topics (port integration, economic activities, environment and risk, basic services) to draft a land use plan based on different development scenarios. Furthermore, UNOPS is training national and local staff on the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) tools applied to land management in order to promote reliable taxation and revenue collection.

Challenges to Making Infrastructure Sustainable:

The CAT-I tool assessment revealed the following challenges:

Technical and/or programmatic challenges – The Department of Physical Planning and Housing at the national level and the Departments of Planning at the council level lack skilled planning professionals, due to the unavailability of planning-related courses in the country. This implies lack of awareness of sustainable urban principles and also hinders the implementation of their strategic plans.

Governance and/or political challenges - Due to a lack of national land policies guiding zoning of land and spatial siting of infrastructure in The Gambia, creating an updated infrastructure plan is challenging for partner institutions. Institutions involved in planning also lack data-sharing and coordination mechanisms.

Financial and/or economic challenges – The Gambian government does not have sufficient capital to implement strategic plans, nor to invest in prioritized infrastructure projects.

Outcomes and Lessons Learned:

- In order to support governments moving towards integrated strategic infrastructure planning, it is necessary to adapt international best practices to local circumstances and connect principles to the challenges encountered by government officers in their day-to-day work by following a “learning by doing” approach.
- In the case of The Gambia, an urban forum was highly successful in encouraging citizens to participate in envisioning and drafting an urban plan that would meet their needs. This effort promoted inclusivity and government accountability.

- Future work will need to focus on ensuring buy-in from different levels of government to ensure actual implementation of strategic visions, and how to sustain citizens' engagement beyond the strategic planning stage.

For Further Information:

- [African Development Bank. \(2020\). Gambia - Greater Banjul Area: Sustainable Urban Development Programme 2020–40 \(GBA-SUDP\).](#)
- [Sustainable Infrastructure: Putting Principle into Practice webinar session on Strategic Planning. \(Minute 46:10 is the beginning of Application of the Capacity Assessment Tool for Infrastructure in The Gambia case presentation\)](#)
- [United Nations Environment Programme. \(2021\). International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure. Nairobi](#)
- [United Nations Office for Project Services. \(2020\). Capacity Assessment Tool for Infrastructure.](#)



Photo source: UNOPS