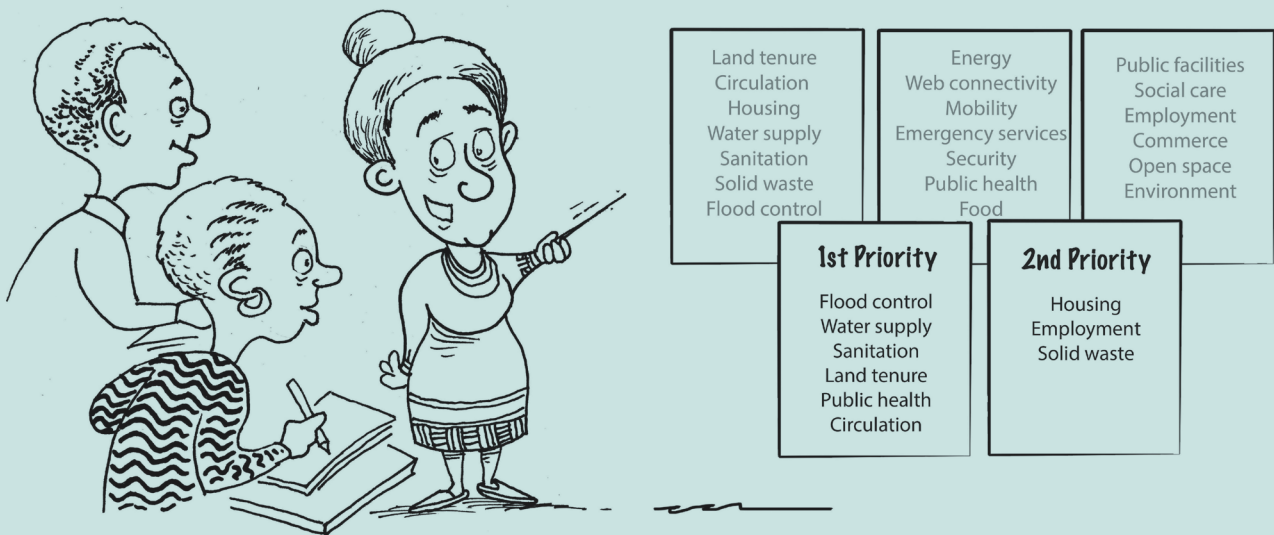




Forming Interdisciplinary Consortia

Consortia create a platform for collaboration and coordination, convening resources and a broad array of expertise to address the interdependent, multisectoral challenges in informal settlements. They also provide an effective model for co-planning with communities and building a coalition among historically adversarial parties like local government and civil society.



Who

Most useful for:

- Local Champions
- Local Governments
- Federation-support NGOs
- NGOs

Also useful for:

- Residents
- CBOs
- Academia
- Funders
- Urban Poor Federations

What

Planning for and upgrading informal settlements is the responsibility of local governments. Forming consortia expands their capacity to do so by recruiting additional expertise if and when needed. They also enable civil society and private sector professionals to engage with both local governments and communities. Each consortium should ideally be led by staff from a local government department. This provides government leadership, institutional legitimacy, and access to public funding for planning and implementation.

Experts from leading civil society organizations in each sector contribute their specialized knowledge to consortia and additional capacity for local government departments. They may also provide links to sources of development financing to complement local government resources.

Strong leadership is essential. Leaders in local government know best how to navigate departments to recruit people and leverage resources. Civil society leaders can fill gaps, recruiting needed expertise and mobilizing resources when required. Leaders should keep in mind that planning is an inherently political process not just a technical one. They must articulate a compelling vision and cultivate alliances that will serve its goals.

Consortia members should mobilize adequate institutional support and resources to undertake their work. They also need entry points to engage residents. Their core tasks include: filling sectoral data gaps with community co-researchers to better understand existing conditions; preparing an associated sector brief; and developing a sector plan informed by residents' needs and aspirations and reflective of negotiations in community planning forums; harmonizing sector plans; and integrating the final plan with citywide plans.



Auxiliary roles to coordinate and support the technical consortia will also be needed. At the inter-consortia level, this includes leadership to champion the project and steward the process, recruit partners, and coordinate inter-consortia collaboration. Within each sectoral consortium, this includes lead organizations managing technical teams by framing issues, project planning, ensuring resource mobilization, and liaising with and supporting local government departments to effectively play their leadership role. In addition, teams are needed to:

- coordinate the engagement of consortia with residents and coordinate co-planning activities; and
- coordinate the spatial elements of sector plans. See [How](#) for more.

For accountability throughout the process and to maintain momentum, consortia activities should be embedded in local government budgets. This includes costs for holding inter-consortia meetings, technical consortia planning meetings, data collection, and, when necessary, hiring outside consultants.

Why

Interdependent challenges require integrated planning. Unlike greenfield sites, people already live in informal settlements; homes, businesses and local institutions already exist. The conventional small-scale, piecemeal investments made by residents and civil society partners tend to focus on one sector and one location in isolation without considering its relationship to other sectors and locations. Consortia enable an array of experts, officials and community stakeholders to develop sectoral plans in tandem, working together across disciplines. Working with community leaders, CBOs and locally-rooted NGOs, consortia also provide opportunities for deeper community engagement by sectoral experts.

In addition to creating greater opportunities for co-planning with communities, consortia can also enlist participation across local government departments. While planning is often left to the planning department alone, consortia enable other departments to contribute expertise, capacity and momentum to the process.

Consortia invite many players to participate and can create broader interest in and commitment to the process. Plans and outcomes are stronger when parties work together; consortia provide opportunities to minimize competition between organizations that might otherwise undermine the process. Involving many organizations can also help meet minimum legal requirements for participation. Partners can also pull and pool more resources for planning. Finally, local governments partnering with civil society leaders can link local government to broader processes of governance.

Consortia also enable stakeholders to do what they do best; each consortium can focus on their strengths and rely on other consortia where they lack expertise. This promotes synergies

and more inclusive plans. It can also conserve resources as consortia will have more in-house expertise and will not need to hire additional experts in many cases.

Finally, consortia offer an effective approach for coalition building among historically adversarial parties like local government and civil society. These partnerships can ultimately demonstrate that governments can work with other partners to plan their cities.



“ [By] bringing institutions on board [...] we were able to showcase that civil society can speak with a common voice and fight for the rights of the poor [...]. For us, it was an achievement to show that yes, we can work together to achieve and there is a lot of opportunity when we work as a team [...]. We were able to raise our issues very well to the government and they listened to us, we had synergy between government and civil society. ”

Jane Wairutu Program Manager, Slum Dwellers International – Kenya

Personal communication, 17 June 2022.

Where

Developing an upgrading plan is a highly local process. Stakeholders convened by consortia should also be locally-based and offer local knowledge and expertise. It can also be useful to include regional and international players; but, they should play a supportive role for local institutions and processes, not leadership roles. For example, an international NGO may have useful expertise in planning sanitation in informal settlements; unless the NGO has local staff, they will only be able to advise the process. In another example, local universities are important stakeholders to include in consortia. However, they can also leverage their broader network so that academics in other cities or countries can contribute expertise and capacity as needed to the process.

While consortia will likely meet in offices or conference centers, members should also be working in the settlement and engaging residents to collect data, determine priorities, develop and validate plans, and ultimately to implement those plans.

Finally, keep in mind that all the consortia are working in the same place and with the same people. Their specific tasks and objectives will differ but the broader goal of providing infrastructure that improves the lives of residents will be the same. Plans must be integrated for optimal design.

“ Our goals were really the same, we were targeting the same people. The different activities that each one of us was undertaking was cleared to the same people and as my colleague has mentioned, those people became very key because the corridors they were opening for the roads were the same ones to be used for providing the other services like the street lighting, they were the same service for the water and sanitation and also for the roads. So, by taking them and also agreeing on how we were to organize the execution of the activities [...], by opening the corridors and demarcating the boundaries, they helped the other services to be able to come in. Then we were able to agree that when it came now to the actual execution, the sewer services took the lead because they were deep and sometimes using the same corridor where the road carriage and water will come, so we put the sewers first, back fill and then the road carriage will operate over the sewers services and we were able now to use the same corridor for the various services. ”

Stephen Githinji Engineer in Environment, Water and Sanitation, Nairobi Metropolitan Services (Kenya)

Personal communication, 27-28 April 2022.

When

Consortia can be formed at any time. But, they will be most useful (and feasible) after an official project declaration has been made. Without a declaration, many potential partners may not have confidence in the project and be unwilling to commit people and resources to an uncertain process.

Sectoral consortia provide the most value during the data gathering and technical planning phases of the process. That said, planning in informal settlements should be incremental, focusing on the most urgent needs first and iterating from there. Therefore, consortia should be formed as possible. For example, once roads, water and sanitation infrastructure are planned but no plans for electricity have taken shape, a new consortium could be formed to take up this work. Even as infrastructure is being built, there might be ongoing opportunities for new consortia. For example, once roads have been constructed, a consortium could be formed to plan for improved solid waste management. Additionally, the consortium that was responsible for planning a sector might not be well-suited to overseeing the plan's implementation; therefore, forming a new consortium for implementation may be required.

How

Forming consortia and coordinating multisectoral planning will not be a neat, linear process. Multiple activities described in this section will happen at the same time. They also may not have a clear start or end point. That said, the following sequence roughly outlines an ideal workflow.

Form a Leadership Team

Persuading potential government, civil society and academic partners will require dedicated local champions to steward the process. To start, this leadership team does not need to be formally organized. Rely on your existing relationships and those of other leaders that join you to begin articulating a compelling vision and build momentum. This will be important for both identifying and convincing partners to join consortia.

The leadership team will be central to undertaking the activities described below, in particular for coordinating inter-consortia collaboration. It will also play a key role in navigating the inevitable turnover of local government staff and elected officials.

Articulate a Clear, Compelling Vision

Interdisciplinary, multipartner planning consortia is a novel strategy and will be unfamiliar to many planning practitioners. Indeed, the entire approach of co-planning upgrading initiatives at scale in informal settlements will likely be met with skepticism by many, in government and civil society alike.

Therefore, it is crucial to formulate a clear message of the benefits of the approach and consistently articulate a vision that captures the interests of different potential partners and presents compelling reasons for them to engage in an unknown and ambiguous process. These messages should be based on evidence that establishes real needs. Key messages include:

- the importance of integrated planning in the complex, interdependent development environments in informal settlements;
- the need for community participation and ownership in the process; and
- the value of collaboration between community, government and civil society partners.

The goal of forming consortia is not simply to coordinate sectoral planning, it is also to build a coalition among potentially adversarial parties. Coalition building will be critical for creating political will, generating resources, convening expertise and stewarding the advocacy, planning and implementation processes.

Draw inspiration from related Videos and this Guide, in particular the [Why](#) and [Examples from the Field](#) sections.

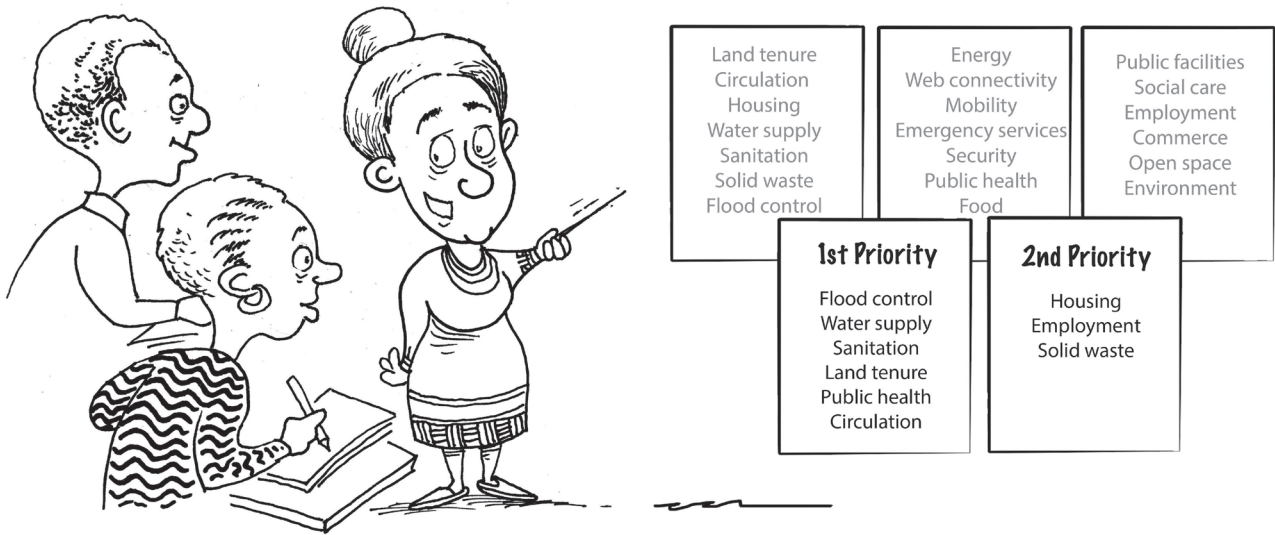
Determine Priority Sectors

Working closely with residents and their CBO and civil society partners, determine which sectors have the most pressing challenges in the settlement (see [COMMUNITY-LED DATA COLLECTION](#)). In addition to priority sectors, pay particular attention to associated spatial planning needs and accessibility factors.

Potential Sectors to Include

Land tenure	Ownership, rights and access to land
Circulation	Roads, lanes and paths; paving; connections to city; accessibility
Housing	Quality, availability and affordability of shelter
Water supply	Boreholes, trunk lines, last mile connections
Sanitation	Toilets, sewers, last mile connections, pit-emptying
Solid waste	Garbage collection and removal, recycling, street cleaning
Flood control	Stormwater drains
Electricity	Power lines, off-grid renewable sources
Energy	Cooking fuels, stoves
Web connectivity	Towers, land lines, public facilities
Mobility	Public transit, vehicle traffic, biking and walking
Emergency services	Fire response, medical response, disaster response
Security	Policing, crime prevention, street lighting
Public health	Hospitals, health centers, maternity and infant care clinics, home visits, disease, nutrition, pest control
Food	Markets, goods delivery
Education	Primary and secondary schools, vocational training centers
Public facilities	Community centers, public halls
Social care	Children daycare, elderly and disabled services
Employment	Jobs access, job safety and reliability, income generation opportunities
Commerce	Buying and selling of goods on streets and in markets
Open space	Green space, sports fields
Environment	Air quality, water bodies, riparian zones

Careful sequencing plays an important role. You likely will not be able to undertake planning for all sectors at once. Focus on the sectors where residents identify the most urgent needs. This will ensure greater community buy-in and help build momentum for iterative, incremental improvements.



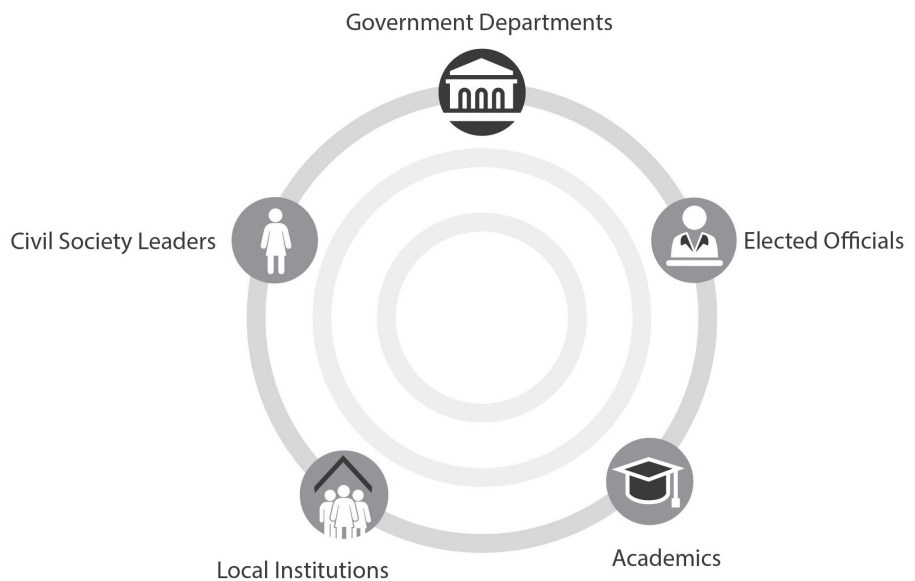
Roadways provide essential enabling infrastructure for many other sectors. Without roads, it is nearly impossible to plan and build other infrastructure like water, sanitation and electricity lines and storm drains as well as provide access for emergency services. They also support solid waste removal, increased commerce, and improved mobility and public transit access. Finally, roads support ongoing iteration for additional, incremental improvements in basic infrastructure and services.

Housing, especially on private land, can be contentious. In the exclusionary legal landscapes of most countries, private property rights are upheld over collective needs, in particular the needs of the urban poor. Private landowners will likely contest housing plans and they will have the law on their side. In addition, structure owners – whether they hold title deeds or not – will likely oppose housing plans as well. Therefore, even though housing may be a priority issue, you may want to sidestep its challenges to start. Plans, and implementation, in other key sectors can support iteration towards housing improvement plans.

Identify Key Players

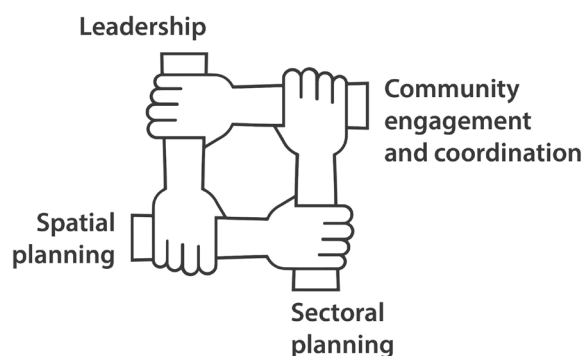
Rely on the knowledge and relationships of the leadership team to map key players, including local institutions, government departments, elected officials, civil society leaders and academics. Each will play important roles.

See [Determining Roles](#) for more.



Form Teams and Delineate Roles and Responsibilities

There are four primary roles with distinct sets of responsibilities. Each supports the work of the others.



Roles and Responsibilities

Leadership

Determine consortia, delineate roles and responsibilities, cultivate key alliances, recruit consortia members, and coordinate inter-consortia collaboration as well as lead technical work teams in sectoral consortia.

Likely comprised of local champions from government and civil society.

Community engagement and coordination

Interface between planning consortia and residents, support data collection to support technical sector plans, coordinate community planning forums, and manage negotiations between residents and planning consortia (as well as support the mobilization and organization of and communication between community stakeholders).

Likely comprised of community leaders, CBO and federation leaders, federation-support NGOs and other locally-rooted civil society organizations

Spatial planning

Manage spatial considerations of sectoral plans; through the community coordination team, negotiate space with residents; and coordinate other technical aspects of sector plans (in particular housing, circulation infrastructure and associated services like water, sanitation, storm drains and electricity).

Likely comprised of urban planners from government and civil society as well as community leaders

Sectoral planning

Co-design data collection tools with residents to fill gaps in sectoral information, participate in community planning forums, develop sector briefs and technical sector plans, work closely with the spatial planning and leadership team to harmonize sectoral plans and their coordinated implementation. While the other primary roles likely only require one team each, sectoral planning teams should be organized into consortia by themes, e.g. the Water and Sanitation Consortium, the Public Health Consortium, etc.

Likely comprised of engineers, urban planners and professional researchers from government, civil society and academia

Separating these roles into distinct teams enables you to convene a diverse array of expertise and allows teams, in particular the sectoral consortia, to focus on what they know best. For example, technical experts likely have little experience mobilizing residents and coordinating planning with communities. Forming a specialized Community Coordination team leaves engineers and planners free to focus on their work while also incorporating the local knowledge and planning decisions of residents.

Form Sectoral Consortia

Based on identified community priorities, available resources and opportunities, and political considerations, determine what consortia are needed. Aligning sectoral consortia with local government departments, combining sectors where appropriate (e.g. water, sanitation and electricity), can help ensure a greater level of buy-in and leadership from local government. Also consider aligning consortia to national (e.g. countrywide 2030 or 2050 plans) and international goals (e.g. the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals).

Recruit Partners

Leaders from local government departments and other members of the leadership team should leverage their networks to recruit partners. Pay special attention to what each player's incentives may be and speak to their interests. For government departments, this could be their statutory obligations and commitments to national and international development targets. For political leaders, this could be providing a platform to win votes. For utilities, it could be providing services sustainably in challenging environments and expanding revenue generation. For NGOs, it could be continuing work they already do but with greater scale and political buy-in.

Potential Candidates for Consortia Members

Leadership

- Directors and other leaders in local government departments
- Directors and other leaders in local civil society organizations
- Prominent academics in local universities and institutes
- Local elected officials
- Local government administrators
- Informal settlement residents recognized as local leaders
- Any other local champions

Community engagement and coordination

- Residents recognized as local leaders
- Residents trained in mobilization, coordination and research
- CBOs
- Federation-support and other grassroots-support NGOs
- NGOs locally-rooted in the settlement

Spatial planning

- Urban planning department of the local government
- Urban planning NGOs

Sectoral planning

- Local government departments
- NGOs, development institutions and private sector organizations with relevant, needed expertise in each sector

While most partners should be locally-based, there may be meaningful opportunities to enlist aid from internationally-based NGOs and academic institutions.

Create a Coordinated Work Plan

Each consortium will undertake work individually but it is crucial to regularly coordinate work across consortia. Consortia tasks likely include:

- Filling data gaps by working with community co-researchers.
- Preparing a situational analysis of existing conditions.
- Preparing a sector brief to share with residents and other consortia.
- Holding community planning forums where residents will:
 - share needs and aspirations, negotiate among themselves, and envision plans;
 - provide feedback on draft sector plans; and
 - final sector plans..
- Preparing draft sector plans and a final sector plan.
- Helping integrate the final sector plan with other sector plans as well as citywide plans.
- Advocate for ratification of the final plan.



Coordinate Inter-Consortia Collaboration

Interdependent challenges require integrated planning. The leadership team and consortia leaders should coordinate the work of each consortium to harmonize sectoral plans. Organize inter-consortia meetings every few months during the planning period where consortia members can present their work and get input from other consortia. This is particularly important for spatial planning so the spatial planning team should play a prominent role in these meetings. For example, the alignment and width of roads must go hand-in-hand with plans for water and sanitation infrastructure. Water and sanitation impacts public health. Schools need water and sanitation connections.

Well coordinated inter-consortia collaboration is a crucial practice at the center of the consortia planning approach. It facilitates continuous reflection, knowledge sharing and collaboration across the different consortia. Convening specialized expertise across a range of disciplines and the resources and experiences of each partner institution, can help develop new knowledge as well as deepen consortia members' understanding of lived realities in the settlement.

Iterate

Informal settlements do not lend themselves to conventional planning approaches (such as a comprehensive master plan). Unlike greenfield sites, people already live there; homes, businesses and local institutions already exist. Some needs are more urgent than others and some locations are more vulnerable than others. Start by focusing on the most urgent needs and most vulnerable locations. Official planning documents and infrastructure investments help create an enabling environment for ongoing planning for iterative, incremental improvements. As you fill gaps in service provision, there will be more space to take on new challenges and new sectors. You can rely on existing consortia or form new ones, as required.

In addition, the consortium responsible for planning a sector might not be well-suited to overseeing the plan's implementation; therefore, forming a new consortium for implementation may be required.



Considerations

Can we copy the consortia model from an existing project?

No. You can draw lessons and inspiration from existing projects. But consortia formation, work plan and collaboration will depend on who is involved and the specific needs of each settlement. There is no blueprint. Instead seek to replicate the roles played by different institutions, organizations and people and adapt them to your context. Who plays each role could be quite different from one city and settlement to the next. You will also likely encounter the need for new roles and approaches to collaboration with communities and between consortia as you go.

What if needed expertise does not exist locally?

Look beyond your city or even your country if need be. But be selective — only enlist organizations that will contribute tangible expertise and resources and that will commit to the process. Otherwise, enlisting them will not provide meaningful input or outcomes and make already challenging coordination work even more difficult.

Challenges

Sustained Leadership

An undertaking as complex and politically challenging as participatory upgrading at scale requires persistent champions and dedicated stewards. However, if the responsibility for carrying the project forward is placed in few hands, this can compromise a project's momentum, longevity and ultimate success if these few stewards do not continue to play their crucial roles. This is more likely to happen than not, as stewards encounter challenges navigating political turnover, in their personal life, or simply grow tired. To overcome this, spread out the entry points for participation, buy-in and responsibilities as much as possible from the start so that the project is less dependent on a few people and possibly even gain some institutional momentum in the local government.

Lack of Resources for Planning

If public funds are not dedicated to planning from the start, scarcity of resources will provide ongoing challenges for consortia. However, if you wait for resources and funding, you may never get started. Once you have begun, you can find resources as you go.

You can overcome a lack of resources by convening a broad array of expertise so that consortia do not have to pay consultants to do work they can do themselves. You can also reiterate the value of participation for an organization's larger goals and persuade them to do their own resource mobilization when necessary. Even better, persuade partners to commit their own resources from the beginning. This does not have to be money; their time and expertise will be

just as valuable if not more so. Also ask partners to commit to completing the process to deter losing valuable expertise before work is done.

Keep in mind that the lack of resources can also provide some advantages like greater collaboration to confront challenges and a deeper sense of ownership of the process.



“ The nature of the planning process was more of an advantage than a challenge. [...] many, many times while we needed to do something and we didn't have money, so we had to sit together and kind of figure, how do we do this without resources? Or who has just enough resources to get this thing done? So, the lack of resources, I think that could be a challenge when it comes to implementing a similar process without availability of resources. But it also deepened the sense of ownership, because everybody gave out something that was given freely. ”

Jane Weru Executive Director, Akiba Mashinani Trust (Nairobi, Kenya)

Personal communication, 17 June 2022.

Unknown, Ambiguous Process With No Precedent

Given that this approach to upgrading will be unfamiliar to many and therefore represent an ambiguous process with little precedent, you may encounter skepticism, misunderstanding and lukewarm commitment (if not outright dismissal). And because many organizations will be involved, each may seek different outcomes that best serve their vision for and interests in the project. Civil society organizations and local government departments may also be unaccustomed to working together. They may also be uncertain what outcome the process will have. This can all add up to a risky proposition for consortia members. You can overcome this by persistently repeating the project vision and sharing examples from successful projects. Also look for small wins to demonstrate tangible outcomes as you go.

You can also instill greater confidence in the process by convincing key players in government and partners to sign Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs).

Lack of Community Networks Organized At Scale

Without social movements like urban poor federations, mobilizing residents at scale will likely prove challenging and perhaps even impossible. In this case, start small to learn. During this period, invite experienced practitioners from other cities and countries for learning exchanges. Once you have gained sufficient experience in mobilizing residents to co-plan and convening interdisciplinary expertise, you can attempt greater scale.

Different Work Speeds

Because each consortium will have different leadership, resources and challenges, the consortia will inevitably work at different speeds. This will likely create delays and frustrations. You can

mitigate this by investing in inter-consortia meetings to push consortia to get their work done. However, in some cases, you will simply have to accept the delays and do the best you can.

Partners Leaving During the Process

Due to competing priorities for time and resources, some consortia members will inevitably drop out of the process. Staff turnover is also common within partner organizations and other staff may not have the time, expertise or interest to replace them.

You can overcome these challenges by finding additional partners as possible to take their place. This is another reason that having a dedicated leadership team both for the entire process and within individual consortia is so important.

Examples from the Field

Mukuru, Nairobi (Kenya)

Mukuru is a large, densely populated area; no one organization would have been able to undertake planning alone. To address the interdependent, multisectoral challenges, interdisciplinary planning consortia were formed, convening expertise in priority sectors including housing and road infrastructure; water, sanitation and energy; environment and natural resources; and health and education services. Local government departments, along with leading civil society organizations in each sector, led the consortia planning process to formulate sector plans and ultimately an Integrated Development Plan for Mukuru. Civil society, academic and private sector partners provided needed expertise and additional capacity for local government departments.



“ The County government worked closely with the Muungano Alliance [and other consortia leads] to bring 42 partners on board from leading civil society organizations and universities. County departments led each consortium and coordinated the partners. The consortia model proved itself an effective strategy for collaborating closely with communities and building a coalition among historically adversarial parties. The consortia also enabled members to contribute different types of expertise to develop an inclusive, locally-appropriate and integrated upgrading plan for Mukuru. We believe this model of consortia, of having different consortia, is a good model that would be able to ensure that other settlements also benefit just as Mukuru has done. ”

Marion Rono Deputy Director of Housing and Urban Renewal, Nairobi Metropolitan Services

Personal communication, 1 August 2022.

Given that the planning process was something new and therefore ambiguous, a defining challenge for the consortia was assuring members had adequate resources and institutional

support. County departments and civil society partners worked together to identify resources for planning activities. It proved challenging to maintain the involvement of some consortia members as they largely worked on a pro bono basis. Since 2017, consortia members have given USD 1.6 million in their time to the SPA planning process. Despite these challenges, major tasks were largely completed on schedule. The work of the Muungano Alliance was particularly successful, working closely with consortia to hold community planning forums that captured residents' inputs down to the household level.

According to many key players in the Mukuru SPA, they could not have achieved what they did without the consortia. The political climate was challenging and Nairobi City County had a volatile government. Each time that leadership built relationships with key officials, there was political turnover. MoUs that were intended to resolve this issue were never signed. Some consortia and members were more motivated than others and performed at different levels. Despite this, the government has already begun to implement plans that have reduced residents' climate vulnerabilities. Additional consortia have also already been formed, for example to plan the riparian zone along the Ngong River. The Mukuru SPA provides a successful model of coalition-building and iterative, incremental planning.

Related Components

Guides

- [Determining Roles](#)

Methods

- [Risk Profiling: Identifying Risks, Assessing Solutions and Determining Community Priorities](#)

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