Pathways to Equitable Healthy Cities Project

Key Partners Workshop

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Accra, Ghana

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Summary

The workshop was organized by the *Pathways to Healthy Equitable Cities Project* and hosted by University of Ghana, Accra. It was attended by a diverse group of local policy and civil society stakeholders, along with members of the international research team. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Share views of up-to-date key issues of urban development and health in Accra and align policymakers and decision-makers' priorities to the Pathways projects' current themes
- Understand the institutional context of urban development and health in Accra, create and support existing links across institutions, researchers and partners
- Identify and develop concrete opportunities for future scenarios on urban development that align local issues and priorities with Pathways outputs

The participants engaged in a series of activities, going from identifying key issues, to a vision of how Accra could look like in 1-2 years to mapping relevant institutions and stakeholders and writing action plans on how to make this happen.

Key learnings/messages

- **Housing and sanitation** arose as the most important issues in Accra and just as difficult to tackle. Other issues of mobility, air pollution and transport are interlinked and stem from housing and sanitation. Noise pollution is also important but on a different level.
- **Land tenure (ownership, access and value of land) is a key factor in tackling housing**. Difficulties of accessing and buying land were discussed as well as cultural barriers, the role of traditional chiefs and the complexity of expanding horizontally.
- **Difficulties in accessing finance to buy** is also key to inadequate housing issues. The complexity of accessing mortgages or any other loan due to risk factors is stopping middle-income families from buying the available housing units.
- **Difficulties in accessing materials and regulations for these materials** are barriers to building as well as incentives for informal settlements. Difficulties in **providing services** to informal neighborhoods lead to issues in sanitation and water management.
- **Sanitation, flooding and running water challenges will get worse over time** due to the combined effects of climate change, population, affecting health equity.
- **Continued horizontal urban expansion presents growing challenges to delivering services**, generated in part by land ownership and financing uncertainties. There is an emerging debate about upwards expansion. .
- **Networks of relevant actors are complex with multiple relationships.** These include federal ministries, local assemblies, landowners (including traditional chiefs), public and private developers, banks and lenders, service providers (housing, sanitation, transport, waste management; public and private) and research organisations.
- **A structured 'action plan' to achieve urban development leading to better and more equal health outcomes was elaborated**, including action on vehicles emissions, emissions from cookstoves, upgrading and service provision in slums, housing development, reform of markets and tenure of land, public transport (public and private providers), waste collection and household sanitation. A challenge to PATHWAYS is to articulate its research to key into these challenges systematically.

- **Much good policy already exists, the real challenge is often to implement what has been agreed.**

Next steps for researchers

Meetings such as these ones are key in aligning the research carried out in Pathways with the city's priorities in policy and action.

Researchers in Pathways can and will:

- Provide baseline evidence on density / available land
- Draw links between to air pollution as well as mobility polluting current urban dynamics, health outcomes and systemic actions on housing, sanitation, mobility and services.
- Assess how actions and policies will influence health equity, separately and together
- Analyse the trade-offs of going up vsvs going out? How does this impact the provision of services, in both cases?

We hope to have another meeting, similar to this one, in about 18 months' time, with PATHWAYS researchers presenting preliminary results and continuing an open dialogue with policy makers.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact us (camilla.audia@kcl.ac.uk or majid.ezzati@imperial.ac.uk).

Day one

Opening Session

Introduction

The workshop was opened by Professor Samuel Agyei-Mensah with a brief welcome address. Participants then took turns to introduce themselves. Professor Majid Ezzati presented an overview of the Pathways to Equitable Healthy Cities Project to provide the discussions with a context. Since the past 5 to 10 years, attention is being paid to inequality because it has become a barrier to social agenda and progress on sustainable development. Cities that have evolved beyond national governments can do a lot about inequality because city policymakers are closer to the constituents as has been seen in issues concerning climate change, housing as there are many innovative solutions coming from cities.

The project aim was to think about cities in ways that improved health. The projected operates in six cities across different continents. Across these cities, it was pointed out that, while rural population had become stable and declining, the urban population was increasing. The project is made up of a consortium, in Ghana, the University of Ghana was the lead implementing partner. There are both academic and policy partners who are engaged on a wide array of topic including health, sanitation, housing, pollution, water and climate change. The first consortium meeting was organized in May 2019 in Accra Ghana.

The project focuses on three major areas which are:

1. Develop policy options
2. Evaluate policy options
3. Adapt policy to focus cities

Connected to all these is the underlying notion of promoting equity. That notwithstanding, the project works in four general areas namely:

a) Transportation and mobility
b) Built and natural environment including housing
c) Water Sanitation and waste
d) Urban Services e.g. health, water, safety

What the project does in all these it to measure and characterize complex urban environments because the project is interested in equity. The project also tries to predict the impact of policies on health.

Session 1 - Research Context and Participants validation feedback (plenary)

Dr. Camilla Audia brought participants to speed with what had transpired since the start of the project. The essence was to make sure there was similar understanding of city issues among participants and to identify and develop concrete opportunities to work with policy makers by aligning the science the project develops with priorities elected by participants.

The project, during May 2019 workshop held in Ghana, had identified two clusters of priority issues that participants at the time felt were the most pressing urban challenges in Accra. One section of the participants felt that sanitation, transport and noise pollution issues were very critical for the city. The other section of the participants felt that housing was the most urgent issue facing the city.

This workshop in October 2019 sought to validate those choices from the broader selection of participants in attendance.

Reaction of Participants:

The contributions of most participants agreed largely with the choices of the earlier meeting that the themes of sanitation, housing, transport and noise pollution were all major issues in Accra. However, no clear consensus could be reached on the hierarchy of priority. This was partly because of the strong linkages between these issues and the question of causality. Participants were also concerned about the effects that the priority issues resulted in.

As evidence of its priority, a participant alluded to the significant share of funds spent by the Accra Metropolitan Assembly on just waste collection alone, excluding other aspects of the waste management cycle. However, based on the participant's lived experience as a resident of the city, housing was to be considered as the priority issue. The inadequacy of housing has contributed to the rise in makeshift structures and slums as lower-income households were priced out of the formal housing market. Another participant representing NGOs asserted that for slum dwellers, the principal issue confronting them is affordable housing with the consequence of unsanitary conditions created from the limited choices they had in the quality of the housing services. Moreover, slum dwellers need to be close to their place of work, to offset additional transport costs. *When not on the move, slum dwellers are affected by limited access to urban services and utility such as water*.

In terms of functionality of the city, a participant observed that transport/mobility is key, since a lot of city dwellers moved from the homes to their places of employment, with a large share being trips that ended up in the central business district (CBD) thereby creating congestion. However, it was admitted that this was dependent on the location one was coming from since distance travelled reduces the closer one is to the CBD.

From the perspective of a representative of a local government, the absence of affordable housing contributes to the poor sanitation as people are driven to poorly planned areas that do not have proper facilities waste disposal, unsurprisingly resulting in the unregulated waste dumps and the open defecation.

Noise pollution was mentioned as an issue especially noise from drinking bars/ pubs and churches. However, due to the unavailability of measuring instruments and the consequent inability of the complainant or regulator to establish the degree of disturbance by the noise sources, enforcement through prosecution was very difficult. Moreover, in public spaces noise has now become an untested marketing tool to attract customers.

Generally, the consensus that emerged was that in as much as noise pollution is an issue, it could easily and quickly be solved compared to the issue of affordable housing. Therefore, housing and sanitation have a higher ranking in terms of priority issues than noise pollution.

One participant was of the view that the systems in place are inadequate to respond to issues in the housing, sanitation and transport sector. In the informal sector for instance, you can feel the absence of the government. Therefore, the absence of the systems leaves people to do what they want.

Other factors mentioned were the lack of capacity and inadequate finance in dealing with the priority issues.

Session 2 – Problem Tree Exercise

Based on the priority issues discussed participants were grouped into 3 teams and tasked to discuss and identify what they could agree on as the core issue triggering the observed problem confronting the city. In the process, they were asked to go about their work using a problem tree analysis approach as the tool to unravelling what they believed to be the core issue. The group presentations are as follows

Group 1:

The group identified the following as priority issues.

- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)
- Housing
- Noise Pollution
- Legal and institutional arrangements
- Service delivery

Housing

Under housing the group identified the problem of inadequate number and quality. The causes were elaborated as:

Cause	Elaboration	Effects
Land	- The cost of land is very high for low- and medium-income people to pay. - Furthermore, the different ownership of land i.e. chiefs, individual and state as well as the difficult of land titling contributes to the challenges in the housing sector. - Sometimes also accessibility of land is also an issue.	High cost of land leads to informal housing and proliferation of slums. This also affects quality. Ownership issues lead to squatter settlements
Finance	- Mortgage/ Construction Finance is still embryonic and not fully developed in the country.	This results in housing poverty and lack of basic services

	- Since construction is capital intensive the limited access to it impedes construction.	
Material	- Materials involved in construction are expensive. - Also, this point is affected by quality and availability	
Technology	- Poor Identification and use of appropriate technology to reduce cost and time in construction	

Summary:

For inadequate housing the group looked at it in terms of quality and quantity but also looked at it in terms of the contributory elements. The elements provided above can be encapsulated in two broad headings namely

- Land governance
- Material and technology
- Access to finance

The interplay among the elements can be seen where the availability and access to land all are constrained by the murky nature of land ownership that drives these other effects of informal supply. This also influences the risk that the banks will perceive for financing housing making finance more expensive. Due to these, the land ownership issues are at the bottom of the inadequate supply. At the same time the materials and technology to improve the quality of housing supply is also missing. Household savings have for a long time served as the source of finance for construction. In the discussions that ensued, housing density emerged as one area that needs to be thoroughly discussed.

Group 2

Group 2 identified inadequate housing as a priority issue. The causes of the inadequate housing were identified as

- Policy – that affects housing quantity, affordability, quality
    - Quantity- Demand and supply – linked to migration
    - Affordability – type of infrastructure
    - Quality - lack of maintenance

The group observed that, in practice, there was a poor linkage between spatial planning and housing development in the country. It was noted that policy, as a set out outlined goals, was in place and therefore not so much of a problem. Rather the implementation of the policy remained the challenge. Lastly, the group felt that the associated services such as sanitation were inherent in discussing the housing problem.

Summary:

The group described the dimensions of the problem as well as attempted to track the root of the problem. The Group traced the problem in terms of housing to inadequacy – quantity and quality. Underlying this was the issue of the means to propel both the supply and quality. Drilling down of the policy challenge led to issue of the weak implementation of the policy. At the root of the

implementation challenges lay the absence of limited delivery mechanisms to provide affordable housing. The group further noted three streams of delivery – public sector, private sector, and household/communal self-help and highlighted how low incomes constrained the household/communal self-help.

Group 3

The group looked at all 4 priority issues that were raised namely:

- Mobility
- Affordable Housing
- Water/Sanitation
- Noise/Air Pollution

Affordable Housing

Two main issues were identified

1. **Number of housing units** – lack of adequate housing units was looked at in terms of people not able to afford the housing in the city core, resulting in people going out of the city centre and designated zones to build resulting in informal settlements.

   It was acknowledged that Government-built housing was not enough to cater for all housing needs. Nonetheless, it was easier for those in public sector employment to access loans due to the ease of deducting payments from source, enforceable by the Controller and Accountant General who administer the public payroll.

2. **Housing services** and related issues - This includes issues linked to water and sanitation. The construction of infrastructure and its attendant impermeable surfaces generally influenced the amount of run-off and, given the poor drainage infrastructure, led to increased flooding.

   The paradox of residing in informal settlements was raised, whereby they have access to some services including water and electricity, and yet lacked sanitary services, forcing them to find individual ways and means of addressing their sanitation issues.

   Besides household-level waste collection, waste disposal was also very poor with collectors resorting to unregulated and inadequate land fill sites, a situation worsened by limited waste transfer sites leaving the city to deal with all waste ending up in the final disposal sites.

Summary:

The group highlighted on affordable housing from the perspective of public sector supply. In it emerges an issue of poor targeting for people who are not employed by the state and lower income workers. Another concern by the group is the issue of drainage where the infrastructure is not well built. So rather than solve problems it rather generates issues with runoff. The last concern for the group was the transfer station and final disposal sites not being adequate. During the discussion it came up that the waste collection companies prefer higher income areas where they are easily able to collect revenue.

Session 3 - Visioning Exercise

In this session, it was intended to solicit from the participants a short to medium-term vision of the city through a visioning exercise. To make the discussions realistic, the participants were guided by a timeline of about 2 years and sought to solicit from participants how they envisaged the city of Accra after a year and half.

 The following represents the discussions from the group deliberations:

Group 1

The group envisioned a ramped up mass housing production as a leverage for the economic transformation of the country utilizing state power to bring land in customary ownership under direct state control. This vision perceived land and its accessibility for housing and other developments to be too important to leave in the hands of the traditional authorities, thus the state take over. It was envisioned that part of the means was investing in in-situ upgrading for slum communities.

Other points included

- Encouraging Cooperative housing scheme
- Tax breaks for housing providers
- Social Housing schemes
- Material and housing technology
- Establishing Housing Investment fund

Group 2

The vision of the group was the attainment of a healthy, livable city.

In terms of improving output quantitatively, it was envisaged that a housing production system would be instituted that would yield over 100,000 units. It would involve real estate developers as key partners with Government facilitation through policy and enforcement. Additionally, the system would also feature household self-help in the expanded delivery through the empowerment of self-help groups to expand on the supply side.

In terms of quality, the vision incorporated a strong linkage with water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services. This would also include investments in the rehabilitation of blighted areas within the city. At the metropolitan level, the vision foresaw slum upgrading and urban renewal initiatives featuring. The mechanism to deliver on these goals and for a sustainable outcome was seen to be institutional strengthening of the variety of actors.

On strategies for affordability, it was felt that both rent and ownership markets had to be targeted. In addition, enforcement of rent control will need to be prioritized as well as housing needs assessment be undertaken to tailor housing needs to identifiable category groups. Also access to capital would need to be improved.

Group 3:

The group envisioned a centralized planning and permitting system to ensure access to affordable housing, access to serviced land and promotion that results in improved health and wellbeing of residents.

To achieve affordable housing, the group intends to adopt the following strategies

- Adoption of low-cost building technology and use of local resources
- Public servants housing schemes
- Flexible terms for low interest bank loans
- Subsidized housing units for rental

To improve access to serviced land the group will adopt the following strategies

- Provision of land by Local Authorities for affordable housing
- Provision of urban services to land provided by local authorities
- Efficient land registration and title services

In terms of local authority centralized planning and permitting services, the group proposed a subsidized service that serves as a one stop shop for all building related permits.

By undertaking all these it was expected that local economic development would be enhanced which would result in improved health and wellbeing.

Session 4 – Actors and Network Mapping

Participants were asked to identify and map out people, organizations and existing/missing networks working on or linked with urban health related issues in Accra.

Group one

Group One categorized the key stakeholder in the sanitation regime into four main groups. The groups are regulators, service providers, users and policy makers.

Regulators	Service providers	Users	Policy makers.
EPA	private waste collectors	Households	Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources
Community Water and Sanitation	informal waste collectors	Market vendors	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development

MMDAs	MMDAs	Schools	relevant ministry department and agencies
Parliament	community-based sanitation providers	Hospitals	
Other relevant actors: religious groups, CBOs, NGOs, academia, universities, Think Tanks, traditional authorities and the financing aspect which talks about the banks, the media as well as those who provide sanitation technology.			

The vision for sanitation in the future is a sustainable sanitation for all. In that it was important that the informal waste collectors are connected to the larger formal private waste collectors.

Group two

Group Two looked at housing and mapped its network of actors. The stakeholders within this area were classified into eight stakeholders namely:

Category	Actor
Landowners	Family, Clans, Stools, Government, Public and Institutions Owing Land
Finance Institutions	Banks, International Partners, Community-Based Saving Groups
Developer Groups	E.g. Devtraco, Blue Rose
Built Environment Professionals	Architect, Surveyors, Planners
Service Providers	ECG, Ghana water company
Regulatory Bodies	District Assemblies
Research and Advocacy Groups	People Dialogue
Policy Making Bodies	Ministry of Works and Housing, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Ministry of Environment Science Technology and Innovation

Presently, landowners and developer groups seem to have a strong relationship because they interact to make land available for developing. Similarly, formal developers and built environment professionals have a strong relationship in the design of housing, just as service providers and the formal developer groups have a strong relationship to engender the provision of services such as water, electricity and to a lesser extent sanitation services to those housing areas. Lastly, a strong relationship also existed for finance institutions and the formal developer groups.

On the other hand, it was observed that weak relationships existed among the following; (a) the finance institution and land owners, (b) the land owners and the policy making bodies, (c) Policy making bodies and regulatory bodies, (d) developer's groups and regulatory bodies, (e) research and advocacy groups and policy making bodies, and (f) the service providers with the regulatory bodies.

The future optimal situation would see the strengthening of the listed weak relationships, including getting better coordination among some the listed stakeholders. In addition, the stronger relations would be maintained.

Group three

The group mapped the network of actors within the transport sector. In total about twenty-six (26) stakeholders were identified and categorized into the following:

Category	Stakeholders
Policy Makers	Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Roads and Highways, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Railways
Infrastructure	Department of urban roads and Ghana highways authority.
Service Providers	Insurance companies
Regulators	driver vehicle and licenses authorities, national road safety commission, MTTD Ghana highways authorities, railways development authorities, MMDA department of transport

There is little consultation between the user and transport infrastructure providers, as there are cases where roads are constructed with little consideration for road users. In the future there should be more consultation and communication between users and the providers of infrastructure which will also control how the city grows and how urban planning is done.

Day Two

Opening Session

Introduction

Day two commenced with a reflection on the previous day's journey and highlights. Participants had a moment to reflect on how the growth path of Accra would be in the case of a do-nothing scenario. Some points that were raised included:

- Sprawling will intensify
- Noise pollution will increase and there will be more exposure
- Increased vehicle emissions
- Outbreak of diseases
- Intense heat and discomfort
- Flooding
- Water rationing and quality issues
- Pollution

The improved scenario will involve:

- Improved mobility – at least a partial BRT on the Adenta Madina Amasaman route
- Improved productivity – and improved recreation.
- Improve quality and quantity of water
- Improved stakeholder consultation

Session 2 – Action Plan

The final exercise for the workshop was the drawing up of an Action Plan. Therefore, participants were to explore how all involved actors would need to be doing things differently for achievement of its vision. Participants worked in 2 groups and the outcome of their work is presented below.

Group 1					
Problem	Suggested Activity	Who?	When	Where?	How
Vehicular emission	• Review of existing legislation on importation of over-age vehicles • proper disposal of some of the over-age vehicles • Emission testing • included improving the public transports and traffic management • Developing alternate transport systems • Reduction of taxes for emission efficient vehicles • Promoting Hybrid technology	Ministry of science, technology and innovation, Ministry of Transport, MRH, EPA, the Local Authorities, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development Ghana Revenue Authority	2022	Across the County	a review team made up of stakeholder consultation, research groups, engagement with parliament and then public education and enforcement
Household Fuel pollution	• Energy efficient stove for fish smokers • clean fuel and cookstoves • intensifying the sensitization of policies	Energy Commission, EPA, Forestry Commission, Local Authorities, Food vendors, Ghana Gas, NGOs, CSO, Worker Associations	2022	Countrywide Ghana especially in Coastal Communities	community engagement, faith-based organization, and media sensitization
Slum	• slum upgrading • research and participatory data collection	The Ministry of Inner City and Zongo Development, the MMDAs, The CSOs, CPOs, NGOs, the community members	2020-201	Slums in Ghana	engaging in desk studying and community engagement

Group 2					
Problem	Suggested Activity	Who?	When	Where?	How
Inadequate Housing Units for low income earners	• Provision of urban services • public-private partnership	Districts assemblies Chiefs and landowners	2024	Local areas with slums	Local assemblies, the public-private partnership; the NGOs and individuals making these services available.
Land are unregulated with soaring prices in Accra	New land tenure system	Local Assemblies CSOs NGOs Interest Group The lands commission survey departments	2024	Nation wide	- Strengthening institutions to be more efficient and functional. - Education on management of land
Inadequate transport services	formation of intra city transport services Development of bus stops and terminals Transport Information systems	District Assemblies	2022-2024	City of Accra	franchise the various transport routes, regulate the transport fares and provide travel information in terms of scheduled travel information.
lack of infrastructure for segregated waste collection	Provide colour coded waste bins for proper segregation Educate households on proper waste segregation Composting organic and biodegradable Promoting waste to energy	District Assemblies	2024	Accra Household level and community level	Districts assemblies empowered to create byelaws that will fix structural or legal problems within the various areas The institution of byelaws provide subsidies to local companies for waste collection

Inadequate household toilet facilities	provision of toilet facilities in household	local and district assembly	2024	households neighbourhood and communities in Accra	subsidize the facilities for households and then pay percentage of rent to the local assembly.

Conclusion

Participants were hopeful that the linkages between these priorities, visions, actor networks and actions and the project's core thrust of equitable healthy cities. In this regard, the question remained whether there was an optimal measure of density (vertical or horizontal scales) that Accra and other cities had to aspire to in order to improve liability without compromising the health of residents, particularly the poor.

The organizers were hopeful that objectives of the workshop had been achieved and that the researchers had enough material to follow through in their research. The next stage would be to draw the links systematically between the various things that came up especially looking at what happens when the solutions deliberated are implemented and who will be affected by that. It was expected that this would take 12 to 18 months to achieve, following which another engagement session was anticipated, hopefully with all participants availing themselves at that time.