

EAST AFRICA REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON APPROACHES TO INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING, 11TH JULY 2012, PANAFRIC HOTEL, NAIROBI



Delegates during the East Africa Regional Conference, 2012

On 11th July 2012, the University of Nairobi, School of the Built Environment, in collaboration with partners in the academic, government, and civil society sectors organized a regional Conference to explore approaches and share lessons on sustainable up-scaling of informal settlements upgrading in East Africa. With only an estimated 23.5 per cent of the population living in urban areas, East Africa remains the least urbanized sub-region in Africa but overall experiencing one of the highest growth rates in the world. It varies from a low of less than 10% in Rwanda to 35 % in Kenya. What is most notable is the high percentage of urban population living in informal settlements, around 65 per cent. Furthermore UN HABITAT (2006) reports that the rate of growth of urban slums in the region is among the highest in the world at around 5%.

The Conference was officially opened by Mr. Tirop Kosgey, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Housing, Republic of Kenya, represented by Ms. Leah Muraguri, Director KENSUP, while Dr. James Nyoro, then Director, Rockefeller Foundation Africa, and University of Nairobi's Prof. Tom Anyamba, Dean,

School of the Built Environment, and Prof. Peter Ngau, Director, Centre for Urban Research and Innovations, made opening statements. One of the highlights of the opening session was the launch of the Mathare Zonal Plan prepared by the residents of Mathare Informal Settlement in collaboration with University of Nairobi, University of California, Berkeley, Muungano Support Trust (MuST), Slum Dwellers International (SDI), City Council of Nairobi and other service providers.

The conference was organized into three major sessions: Session one: Slum upgrading approaches: lessons and experiences; Session two: New opportunities presented by national constitutions and policies for implementation of informal settlement upgrading; and Session three: Group discussions - towards sustainable informal settlement upgrading.

To strengthen the approaches and initiatives towards informal settlement upgrading in East Africa, this conference adopted the following key resolutions;

>>>> continued on page 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF THIKA URBAN ZONAL PLANNING POLICY DEVELOPMENT



MUKURU KWA NJENGA UPGRADING PROJECT



KIANDUTU SLUM UPGRADING PROJECT



WORLD TOWN PLANNING DAY, 2012

NEWS EVENTS FEATURES STUDIO COMMENTARIES LETTERS
NEWS EVENTS FEATURES STUDIO COMMENTARIES LETTERS

DEVELOPMENT OF AN URBAN DEVELOPMENT ZONAL POLICY FOR MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF THIKA



Thika Town, 2012 Source: www.thikamunicipal.com

INTRODUCTION

Under the devolved system of government, the management of a city or municipality is vested in the county government and administered on its behalf by a board, a manager and other staff appointed by the county service board. In its management the board is to be guided by the integrated urban development plan [IUDP]. The IUDP will be the principal strategic planning instrument to guide all planning, development and decision making regarding planning, management and development in the city and municipality. The Act provides that the city or urban area integrated development plan be aligned to the development plans and strategies of the county. According to the delineating criteria provided in the Act an urban area is a city if its population is at least five hundred thousand residents according to the final gazette notice of the last national census, town if the population is ten thousand residents while, municipality if the population is two hundred and fifty thousand residents.

An urban development zonal plan as well as urban area integrated development plan is a planning tool for directing developments in an orderly and organized manner.

NEED FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT ZONAL POLICY

The Municipal Council of Thika has continued to experience immense development pressure over the past few years due to the rising demand for housing, office and commercial developments. This can be attributed to its close proximity to the city of Nairobi, the fact that it is the District headquarters and that it has an established spectrum of light and medium size industries both in manufacturing and agro-processing. Other factors that have contributed to the growth of Thika town includes, but are not limited to the opening up of the Thika super highway linking Nairobi to Thika, continuing rural-urban migration, availability of numerous educational institutions and opportunities for employment within the industries. However, the Municipal Council of Thika [MCT] has been experiencing a myriad of problems with regard to disharmonious physical developments. Some of the problems include incongruous developments, a changing development scenario, urban sprawl, ineffective development control, subdivision of land to uneconomical sizes among others. The purpose of the assignment was to formulate a policy framework to guide urban development and the actors in the MCT for the next 10-15 years..

The methodology for the preparation of the zonal policy framework was participatory and sought to involve all the residents and all the key

stakeholders in Thika. Among those involved were the Municipal Council of Thika staff, the University of Nairobi, representation of central government agencies, NEMA¹, DDO², DAO³, DPPO⁴, and THIWASCO⁵ among others. During the launch of the plan formulation process held in Thika on 22nd June 2012 Mr. Peter Kibinda, the Director of Metropolitan Planning and Environment in the Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Development reported that the World Bank and the Kenyan Government had signed a financing pact which will oversee a grant of KShs. 25.24 billion for the implementation of the Nairobi Metropolitan Service Improvement Project (NaMSIP). The NaMSIP will finance investments in infrastructure and service delivery in the Nairobi metropolitan region, which accounts for some 17 per cent of the country's population and over 50 per cent of GDP. In addition, NaMSIP will create synergies with the World Bank's proposed National Urban Transport Improvement Project (NUTRIP), which is currently under preparation, by improving access to transport hubs and integrating land use planning into transport and overall urban planning, especially around commuter rail stations in the Nairobi area.

The strategic aim of the Municipal Council of Thika is to achieve a more compact urban form, facilitate higher planned densities, mixed land use development, improved service delivery, and integrated land uses and public transport planning, so as to ensure more diverse and responsive environments while reducing travelling distances. The Urban Zonal Development Policy Plan will provide a framework and strategies for coordinating all facets of physical development and all the actors. It will promote investments in real estate, harmonious urban development and enhanced revenue generation leading to improved service delivery and efficient development administration and management within MCT.

The planning initiative brings together technical staff from the Municipal Council of Thika, central government agencies, the University of Nairobi, and Civil Society. At its inception, the project was jointly coordinated by Architect-Planner Arthur Mwaura (University of Nairobi), Planner Mutegi (Municipal Council of Thika) and Professor Ngau the Director Centre for Urban Research and Innovations/ Urban Innovations Project, DURP, University of Nairobi. The project has already completed its first phase, situation Analysis

by James Wanyoike

¹ National Environment management Authority

² District Development Office

³ District Agricultural Office

⁴ District Physical Planning Office

⁵ Thika Water & Sewerage Company

MUKURU KWA NJENGA UPGRADING PROJECT



Mukuru kwa Njenga

One of the major issues facing urban areas in Kenya is the increased growth rate. With an urban growth rate of 3.0% and a national level of urbanization still rated at 35%, the issue of informal settlements is becoming more complex as time passes. In Nairobi, already 60% of the population is living in the slums, representing a figure that can't be ignored anymore. The informal settlements in Kenya have become a distinct feature in the face of the city, and they are playing a crucial role in the social, cultural, economic and political landscape of the country.

MUKURU PROJECT AND STAKEHOLDERS

Informality is not yet seen as an opportunity to the city, but as a source of conflict and exclusion. Lack of resources, but also insecure tenure is preventing people from investing in their households to improve their environment and quality of life. One of the main reasons is the continuous threat of eviction often taken as a fast "solution" to remove people from land they don't own, but they have been living on for decades, often more than 20 years.

The Mukuru kwa Njenga Settlement Upgrading planning project was initiated by CURI and Akiba Mashinani Trust (AMT) as a strategy to set the bases for the provision of decent housing and secure tenure to the slum dwellers of an area continuously threatened by mass evictions. It is a partnership of four stakeholders playing different roles at different levels: CURI as a centre specialized on urban and regional planning, AMT as an organization dealing with the land tenure, financing and legal issues; Muungano Support Trust as the community mobilize and fieldwork facilitator; and Muungano Wa Wanavijiji as a federation of slum dwellers advocating for security of tenure and better living conditions.

The main objective of the project was to analyse the existing situation [economic, social and physical] and develop a strategy towards the alleviation of poor living standards and insecure tenure of the slum dwellers in Mukuru Kwa Njenga.

PROCESS

To achieve this aim a methodology on secondary data collection, field data collection with the support and participation of Mukuru community, and urban design was developed. An analysis of infrastructure supply and dynamics, including social infrastructure, social structure and administration, land use and ownership, housing conditions and expenditure, economic networks and

business typologies among others, enabled the team to determine the current situation of the area that had guided the urban planning and design.

Some of the key findings included the poor quality of water and sanitation due to inadequate informal provision. High population density is one of the challenges identified by the project. Large tracts of unsuitable land used as residential areas are affected by either flooding or general dampness. The poor accessibility of the settlement encourages the extremely high level of solid waste accumulation, consequently polluting the environment and affecting public health. As a slum, Mukuru Kwa Njenga is also a micro-system with a vibrant economy, social cohesion, unity and good organization of the inhabitants. It is strategically located near the industrial area and main communication spines of the city including the railway. There are large parcels of land owned by just a few entities, which is likely to make negotiations easier. Taking into account the main findings on social, economic, physical and environmental issues, the main urban approach adopted is to try and harness the advantages found and to turn them as much as possible to opportunities.

The main urban design approach proposed is a development for people at human scale based on high densities and mix uses that promote walkability; a development that will focus on maintaining the identity of the place by conserving the main urban landmarks and a sense of place. The strategy includes enhancing connectivity with the city and the conservation and promotion of a vibrant economy by allocating space to the different typologies of business, and by trying to find a middle point between informality and formality.

CURRENT WORK

Currently, CURI, AMT and others are extending the survey to cover more Slums. The aim is to replicate the pilot methodology developed and the urban upgrading approach by extending the same to other informal settlements within the larger Mukuru Belt. The success of this project would prove that there are indeed better ways of dealing with informal settlements by focusing on the still hidden value they can bring to the city.

by Zeltia Gonzalez

STATE OF MUNICIPALITIES IN KENYA - URBAN DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS SURVEY

How does a city, municipality or town authority know that its development initiatives are bearing fruit? And not just any fruits but the intended fruits many a time developers and governments inject a lot of resources to development initiatives geared towards improvement of a people's way of living and the general cityscape. The overall objective is usually to make such areas competitive and worth living and investing in. However, it is usually difficult to measure empirically the level of success of such development initiatives due to a myriad of factors. Some of these factors include: that many of such initiatives are usually fragmented and individualised; there is usually no database to inform such initiatives. Local authorities are never really keen on having a database for their profile and development initiatives; sharing such information where it exists has always been a huge challenge.

Cities are constantly evolving; thus change and management of difference are at the heart of a city's life. When the phenomena of change and difference are handled properly, they present great opportunities whereby urban areas become engines for growth. However, this is not achievable in the absence of adequate understanding of urban characteristics and the relations and trends therein that manifest the interaction of culture, society, and environment. Like any living entity, the realization of healthy urban areas is subject to availability of a proper management framework anchored on variables of city life, underlying relationships as well as diagnostic and corrective mechanisms. More so, the identification and understanding of indicators of the variables and relationships of a city's life will pave way for proactive interventions as well as projection of desirable urban futures.

The above rationale is the foundation of CURI's Urban Indicators Project initiated earlier this year. The project seeks to generate a framework for continuous monitoring of the state of urban areas in order to support a wide range of

urban improvement projects in Kenya. This project is of immediate relevance to several government-initiated interventions, specifically Kenya Municipal Programme (KMP), Kenya Informal Settlement Improvement Project (KISIP). More importantly the indicators project will complement the various urban authorities in the continuous monitoring of the state of urban areas under their jurisdiction. The indicators framework will be available to a broad spectrum of other actors carrying out interventions in urban areas.

The indicators framework that is being explored by CURI is intended to appreciate the holistic and relational nature of the urban environment. Further, it is the core value of the approach to play down the highly technical approach and adopt a human-centred, easy-to-interpret model. The framework is anchored on four key qualities of urban life, namely liveability, competitiveness, governance, and resilience. Each of these will be detailed into input, output, and outcome variables and indicators. The project is in its pilot stage, which targets five municipalities for profiling, namely Thika, Kitui, Mombasa, Nakuru and Kisumu. An inception report has already been completed that forms a guide for operationalization across the sampled municipalities. The initial inputs shall be based on secondary data review as well as data from key offices at municipal level and interviews with various key informants. Of high relevance about this project is that measuring performance and development of urban areas in Kenya is a timely initiative especially considering the fact that devolution as envisaged in the Constitution will transfer immense development responsibilities to the local level (county governments). The output of this indicators project will help reveal how competitive urban areas are to attract investment but also assess the impact of interventions on the situation of the urban areas.

By Karisa CD & Olale Philip

>>>> continued from page 1

- Acknowledging that East Africa's future is unquestionably urban there is urgent need for Governments, Municipalities and stakeholders to urgently reverse the negative phenomenon and inhuman conditions presented by informal settlements in the region's rapidly growing urban areas.
- To counter the expansion of existing slums, prevent growth of new ones as well as improve the lives of those living in informal settlements will require adoption of innovative approaches in tackling the dynamic issues within the region's emerging urban areas and concerted implementation of progressive policies for informal settlement upgrading.
- Sustainable informal settlement upgrading requires visionary leadership and good governance in the management of emerging urban areas, building synergy in partnership for informal settlement upgrading, and broad-based collaboration involving all urban actors and need for multi-disciplinary teams.
- Community led planning and development to address basic needs for infrastructure, housing, and livelihoods is critical in order to avoid takeover of programs meant for the urban poor

The conference was indeed fruitful as lessons and experiences shared provided the needed info to aid in upscaling informal settlement upgrading in the region. From the discussions it was evident that the region has the highest proportion of its population living in the informal settlements. It was further noted that, countries in East Africa though they have popular visions for national development, extreme inequalities make those visions unsustainable. A close look at successful countries shows their Governments have taken responsibility for slum reduction squarely on their shoulders and prioritized people-centred programs for slum upgrading.

Conference photos, interview clips, proceedings highlights and report are available in our website: www.centreurbaninnovations.com

by Olale Philip



KIANDUTU SLUM UPGRADING PROJECT

Kiandutu settlement is the largest informal settlement in Thika Municipality, Kiambu County. The settlement covers an area of 0.922 km² and borders Thika town to the south along Garissa road. Though the condition in Kiandutu settlement is poor, it is significantly better than most informal settlements in Nairobi such as Mathare and Kibera.

From the results obtained from preliminary studio work, it can be acknowledged that majority of the residents of Kiandutu moved there for economic reasons namely employment opportunities and affordable rent. With Thika town urbanizing fast there is a higher rate of immigration which has led to many settling down in informal settlements. An estimated 55.3% of the residents lived outside Thika before moving to Kiandutu while about 22.2% were born in the village.

Accessing health facilities within the Kiandutu settlement is feasible as most of the inhabitants get healthcare without having to go outside the settlement. This is yet another aspect of this informal settlement that makes it stand out from the rest. Majority of the residents live below the poverty line yet most still own the structures they live in. Kiandutu is indeed an intriguing and promising informal settlement.

The Kiandutu settlement upgrading project was initiated in 2011 by Muungano Support Trust (MuST), CURI/University of Nairobi Muungano, Slum Dwellers International (SDI), the Association of African Planning schools (AAPS), Muungano wa Wanavijiji (Federation for Urban Poor), and the community members of Kiandutu



Kiandutu Informal Settlement, 2012

The activities that have been carried include enumerations and land negotiation with the Municipal Council of Thika. In Enumeration the community was trained to carry out self-census, collect as well as verify socio-economic and spatial data (mapping) in their neighborhood. The data collected included basic information for all individual, households, house structures, businesses, public and private institutions, land tenure as well as existing infrastructure and services. This data provides a basis for local planning as well as negotiations for land to improve their Neighbourhoods. The next steps will be conducting household survey of the settlement to verify the data collected as well as develop a slum upgrading plan.

by James Wanyoike

CURI GRADUATE STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Student exchange programs are the common form of intercultural and knowledge exchange involving exchange of students between countries and universities to promote mutual understanding, knowledge exchange and also provide opportunities for development of global perspectives in respective disciplines of study. The graduate student exchange program by the Centre for Urban Research and Innovations (CURI), Department of Urban and Regional Planning, aims at widening understanding on issues of academic and professional interest in different parts of the world, knowledge exchange, improving existing networks with the partners and creating new networks.

The University of Nairobi through CURI and her partners in both academic and non-academic institutions has entered into various exchange agreements over time. In the past 3 years, CURI has been able to sponsor 4 students for further studies in various Universities across the globe namely: Ms. Miriam Maina currently at Witwatersrand University, Mr. Baraka Mwu at University of Cape Town both in South Africa, Ms. Keziah Mwelu currently at University of California, Berkeley and James Wanyoike at the University of Nairobi.

To promote knowledge exchange, the Centre through the University of Nairobi and Department of Urban and Regional Planning and other partners mainly from the civil society (MuST, AMT, SDI and Pamoja Trust) have hosted a number of joint planning studios and individual students from other universities such as Columbia University and University of California, Berkeley. Through the joint studios, the multi-disciplinary teams are engaged in planning and designing for a special need areas such as informal settlements.



Some successful projects through these studios include: the Kosovo Community-led Slum Upgrading Project in Mathare Slums, Mathare Zonal Plan and Mabatini Settlement Upgrading Plan among others. More studios are being planned as a way to facilitate long-term sharing of knowledge and experiences. On the individual based studies, students in the aforementioned universities with interests in studying areas in Nairobi, Kenya are linked up with the Department of Urban and Regional Planning and mainly CURI and its other partners e.g. Pamoja Trust, MuST and SDI to assist in the carrying out of the studies.

- by Jacinta Mbilo

PLASA – CURI 1st YEAR 2012/2013 ORIENTATION



1ST Years' Orientation, 2012

Orientation week usually provides a conducive atmosphere for the fresh students joining the university to familiarize with their new learning environment and to be adequately acquainted with the new life of studentship. This year's orientation week was no different. The Planning Students Association (PLASA) in collaboration with the Centre for Urban Research and Innovations (CURI) organized a joint orientation program for students joining the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Nairobi.

This was done at the tent that was set up at the entrance of the school's ADD building. Anita Wakuze, a planning student was in charge of registering the new students into PLASA where a total of 21 students were registered. Several other planning students took up roles; Dorcas Karuga was in charge of décor while Allan Kinyua and Leonard Irungu facilitated entertainment and photography at the registration desk. On the other hand, Judith Oginga sensitized the new students about the partnership between CURI and PLASA and also presented to them some publications of past events of the organizations. Also at the registration desk were brochures, CURI newsletter and models of past projects that were placed at the tent to enable the first years to have a glimpse of what happened in the preceding classes in the department.

There was also pin-up and presentation of students' past coursework projects. This was facilitated by senior students - Pascal Odirah, Betty Ong'injo, Julius Meso and Dissent Ingati. The pin-up was displayed in space 201 and once registered the new students were taken through the presentations.

Much was done and evidently, the orientation for the year 2012/2013 from PLASA was one of its kind and none of the previous was comparable to it. This was definitely possible because of the inputs that came from different parties and which cannot be ignored. PLASA remains committed to contributing into making planning a visible and better profession.

PLASA wishes to sincerely appreciate the assistance accorded by CURI Secretariat, both financial and otherwise, in facilitating the success of this activity. We further thank the PLASA officials led by the Chairman Julius Meso, who did a lot in coordinating all the activities that took place not to forget the other members who tirelessly volunteered their time and energy.

By Betty Ong'injo and Julius Meso

WORLD TOWN PLANNING DAY, 2012



PLASA Members during the awareness walk, 2012

The World Town Planning Day is a worldwide event which is celebrated in about 30 countries on four continents. On the 8th of November each year, professional planning associations, planning institutions and local

authorities mark this day - a brainchild of Professor Carlos Maria della Paolera of the University of Buenos Aires who in 1949 founded it to advance public and professional interest in planning, both locally and overseas. Moreover, this day intends to draw attention to the aims, objectives and progress of urban, regional and environmental planning, to highlight the contribution that good town planning can make to the quality of our environment, and give special recognition to the ideals of community planning which bring professional planners and the general public together. It is therefore an opportunity to celebrate our collective ability as a global community to shape the places we live in.

The 2012 World Town Planning Day was held on the 8th of November. The theme of the conference was "Constitution implementation towards integrated planning and development, national, county, metropolitan, city, municipal and town council level". The day was commemorated worldwide. Locally, this event was marked at the Kenya School of Monetary Studies under the auspices of the Architectural Association of Kenya – Town Planners Chapter. CURI was represented at this event by Prof Peter Ngau and Mr. Philip Olale.

>>>> continued on page 8

URBAN & REGIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE FORUM

Perspectives from young professional planners in the field as shared with planning students during a forum on Urban & Regional Planning Profession in Kenya: Challenges and Opportunities

Over the years, the Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) has continued to produce to the job market a considerable number of fresh undergraduate urban and regional planners. It has become necessary to review the success rate or otherwise of these graduates, how they have managed to filtrate the job market, the challenges faced and most importantly their societal contribution to the prosperity of Kenya. We note that with the ever increasing competition in the job market, the need to organize a forum where alumni of the Department can freely share their experiences with the planning students not only to encourage them to soldier on but also to sensitize them of the requisite skills required of a planner to succeed is imminent.

Such a forum, christened 'Urban & Regional Planning Profession in Kenya: Challenges and Opportunities' was organized on Wednesday 14th November 2012. This was an 'open debate' mode of forum with a set of panelists (DURP Alumni) contributing freely to a number of questions and issues. The audience included about 80 undergraduate students undertaking a course in urban and regional planning, several Masters students and lecturers. The discussants included Planner William Maina of the Municipal Council of Nyeri, graduate planners David Weyusia and Leina Kilesi both from Center for Urban and Regional Planning consultancy firm and Helen Njoki from MM Consultants.

The broad areas of discussion were but not limited to;

- Experiences as undergraduate degree graduates in the job market previously dominated by graduate (masters) planners
- Opportunities for undergraduate planners within and out of Kenya
- Conquering the job market – skills and techniques

The discussions herein were on the Alumni's experience in the planning profession, their places of work, and issues dealing with professional ethics. Mr Kilesi indicated that he received a scholarship to study for a master's program in China just after graduation. He however indicated that it would be quite advisable for one to work for one or two years, to gain professional experience and be able to make a choice of which line of planning to pursue before joining a masters' degree program. He said that for one to become a planner of relevance after graduation, one needs to be very conversant with the following skills: GIS, SPSS, and research skills. In addition, Mr Kilesi advised on the need for one to develop a very clear professional development plan for oneself. According to Mr. Weyusia, experience from the field has made him realize that what one is taught in campus accounts for only 10% of the planning required for professional practice. He said that as a planner, one needs to sharpen their analytical skills, and the urban design skills is also unavoidable in the planning practice. Planner Maina noted that being the pioneer undergraduate class in urban and regional planning, there existed considerable apprehension among the students due to the fact that they understood little about the course. However, over time they were able to appreciate the profession after guidance from the lecturers. Upon graduation, they lobbied through the then Minister for Local Government for employment in the Local Authorities, a venture that saw the 17 of them deployed to various local authorities.

It emerged from the ensuing discussions that urban and regional planning profession is a rich profession with an array of opportunities both locally and abroad.

Planning students were further advised to develop work portfolios which translate to the profile for any professional in the built environment professions. Mr. Karisa urged the students to have a portfolio of their works in the university and that when one is applying for a masters admission at various institutions, the portfolio becomes handy.

>>>> continued on page 8



Planners Forum

>>>> **continued from page 7**

A number of skills one would require in order to emerge an efficient planner were also highlighted. These skills can be broadly categorized as either hardware skills or software skills. Some of the hardware skills identified include mainly those that touch on information technology and graphical presentations and mapping. These include SPSS, GIS and CAD (Auto CAD and Archi CAD). Software skills are those that are rarely taught and are inherent in an individual; these were probably the most emphasized by the panelists. Some of these skills include integrity (ethics and professionalism), positive attitude, good presentation and personal organization, effective networking, and negotiation and advocacy skills among others. One of the important skills a professional planner needs according to the panelists was integrity, ethics and professionalism.

Negotiation and advocacy skills also got a special mention as some of the requisite skills for a planner. It was noted that planning is by large a political process which calls on the professional to always juggle between a number of needs, options and demands from various sectors and groups in the society. Such advocacy and negotiation skills would enable one conquer the challenges arising from his/her daily planning assignments.

The other skill identified was that of presentation, both at a personal level and of the work one is mandated to do. Ms Helen Njoki emphasized that many people in the professional world judge others on how they appear, so among other things, one should pay attention to their dress code and decorum. Mr. Weyusia further said that as a planner, how you present yourself matters. He even went ahead and gave an example of an architect interviewee who was disqualified based on his dress code. He further said that as a planner, one should also present the work he has done in a manner that will interest the client. On this last point, Planner Maina said that the most basic skill a planner must have is presentation skills. He said that as a planner one needs to internalize his work that sometimes one might have a not-so-well done job, but how he/she presents it may make it look convincing. Therefore one should always present their work in a powerful way. Close to the aspect of presentation was Mr. Kilesi's proposition that it is mandatory for a planner to be able to organize their time well. He said that one needs to focus and

concentrate on what they are doing otherwise they will end up with a shoddy job. The moderator summarized the discussion on skills by indicating that one networks by how one markets him or herself.

"..... a professional is a product, and a product needs to be packaged well in order for it to sell."

As the forum came to a close, a number of issues were raised by the panelists especially on the various aspects that need to be improved within the Department of Urban and Regional Planning in view to improve the caliber of its graduates. First, it was noted that there is need to improve on the information technology course currently being taught to include CAD and GIS. It was suggested that such courses should be introduced to the students at an early stage i.e. from first year of study. It emerged that many students graduate from the course without a thorough grasp of the fundamentals of design in addition to a lack of ability to handle planning-related design work.

The other issue was the need for planners to interact with each other in order to boost networking among them. The opportunities made available by the social media such as facebook was noted. Sites such as the 'Spatial Planners Forum' and the 'Kenya Urban Forum' are some examples of platforms where planners can interact and help boost the planning profession.

".....networking is a powerful tool for a planner, since employers in the job market rarely advertise for jobs in the public media ... most vacancies for professional jobs are usually advertised internally within an organization."

Students were advised to walk into prospective offices to look for jobs and not wait for the same to come by. Another key point was the need to retain promising graduates within the Department and train and mentor them as a way of staff development. It was noted that this is the trend in most universities the world over. The forum ended with a call to have more of such interactive sessions in view to bridge the gap between academia and industry.

By Olale Philip

>>>> **continued from page 6**

The speakers took turns to discuss among others the following: ways and means of improving ethics and Fighting Corruption in the Profession, the Global Aspect of Urbanization, County Planning Legislation and Development Framework, National Development Planning and Vision 2030, Metropolitan, City, Municipal and Town Legislation and Planning Framework, National, County and Urban ICT System - Planning and Development Framework and Housing Development Policy and Strategy.

On the eve of the World Town Planning Day 2012, November 7th, the Planning Students Association (PLASA) from the University of Nairobi organized an Awareness Walk along the streets of Nairobi from Uhuru highway, through Parliament road, Harambee avenue to Moi avenue making stopovers at Parliament, Office of the Prime Minister, Architectural Association of Kenya offices, and the Nation Media house headquarters.

This walk sought to highlight the valuable contributions sound planning has made to the quality of human settlements and their environment towards attaining Vision 2030 and to promote awareness within the profession and also the general public on the need for integrated planning across all levels as stipulated in the Constitution of Kenya 2010. Some of the activities of the day included delivery of a petition addressing pressing planning related issues to the Minister for Lands through Parliament and to the office of the prime minister. In addition, the students addressed the media and also talked with members of the public with respect to the events.