A preliminary plan for integration of the lakefront in the city of Kisumu, Kenya

Mission held from 19 June 2013 to 5 July 2013
In cooperation with MASHAV, UN-Habitat and Kisumu County, with the Weitz Center for Development Studies

Delegation: Amandine Desille – Project coordinator, Dr. Yoel Siegel – Community Economic Development, and Arch. Guido Segal - Planning

Background: His Worship Samuel O. Okello, Mayor of Kisumu, expressed the need for further intervention of UN-Habitat, MASHAV and the Weitz Center in order to bring forward municipal platform and planning issue in Kisumu, with a pilot project focusing on the waterfront. The Council and UN-Habitat representatives mentioned the flourishing redevelopment of seafronts in Israeli cities as well as the past successful activities organized with MASHAV and the Weitz Center. Since 2009, the Weitz Center for Development Studies, within the framework of MASHAV, has implemented a municipal organization strengthening tool, inspired by the Israeli model of "Municipal Strategic Planning Units" (MSPU), which aims at fostering horizontal integration, promoting strategic projects and operating as an entry point for diverse development programs. Very positive feedbacks were given by the Municipal Council, including the desire of continuing the cooperation with MASHAV and the Weitz Center.

Justification of the project: According to the Kisumu Rapid Urban Planning Studio Workshop's results:
- Kisumu is a Kenyan city of approximately 1 million residents with a growing rate of 2.6% per year
- 73% of the total population aged below 30 years old
- 60% of the population currently lives in informal settlements
- 70% of its land surface is grossly underutilized with sparse or no development
- Kisumu economy relies on commerce and trade, transportation, agriculture and fishing
- Poverty incidence is comparable to other Kenyan cities.

However, the report states that due to its central location, its access to Lake Victoria, and viable transport infrastructure, Kisumu holds the potential of becoming a hub for the region. Moreover, Kisumu’s vision is to become a centre of knowledge, tourism and commerce excellence in the East Africa region. Recommendations formulated in the report were a basis for the discussion with UN-Habitat, MASHAV and the Municipality of Kisumu and the program developed here. The proposed program wishes to relate to two specific aspects of the wider workshop's recommendation, which are:

- Urban Economy and Municipal Finance: The program will assess the institutional need and draw the roadmap for implementation of the relevant institutional set-up (economic corporation; strategic planning unit)
- Lakefront focus: The newly established municipal platform should undertake actions to redevelop the lakefront including setting criteria for the spatial planning of the area.
Additionally, MASHAV, Weitz Center and UN-Habitat already have a strong presence in Israel. MASHAV currently carries out four projects in Kisumu; UN-Habitat already out four projects in Kisumu; and Weitz Center conducted first the MSPU project. This last project left different footprints which are the basis for a follow-up work in the area:

1) Conceptual aspects are left. For instance: Adoption of jargon from strategic planning, the lake concept shifted from curse to asset.

2) Organizational aspects are left. The MSPU still exists but with less staff; There is no process of strategic planning; However, there is an impact at organizational level; The project is in the organization’s memory.

3) Content aspects: Work that the MSPU did in 2010 is a base for other strategic documents.

Objectives of the first visit: The first visit aimed at assessing the current situation, notably mapping of: local assets, stakeholders, existing municipal platforms and existing projects; as well as establishing a taskforce with relevant stakeholders in Kisumu. At the end of the visit, the taskforce is provided with objectives, activities and milestones.

Results: UN-Habitat and MASHAV representatives carried out a wider range of activities. First of all, in a time of political transition and reform, it was crucial to understand and integrate the county vision in our plans in order to mobilize county and municipal staff. The team translated the county vision in projected regional plans. It is worth mentioning that it was the first time that county representatives and staff saw a mapping of the flagship projects under the new vision. The team provided local staff with conceptual programs and lay-out plans of three areas of the Central Business District (CBD): the current CBD including the Kenya Railway Corporation lands, the northern beach strip and the southern beach strip. In order to provide funds to sustain for the developments forecasted in the planning, the team came up with economic mechanisms: first, the creation of an economic corporation called Special Vehicle Project and second, the establishment of a special tax zone in prime area. These mechanisms were very much welcomed by the county representatives and staff but also by UN-Habitat management. Finally, the key result at institutional level is the collective acknowledgement that statutory planning is the main tool to stimulate economic development. This led to a more effective mobilization of county and city staff for the follow-up component led by the Weitz Center.

Donga beach and the BMU

Railway and port
Telapia beach

Lwang’ni beach