Lagos, Nigeria’s commercial capital, is one of Africa’s most populous and fastest growing cities. Lagos State Government estimates put the current population of metropolitan Lagos at 17.8 million people, 85 per cent of the state's population.¹

Governing Africa's fastest growing megacity State

The city is geographically well placed to serve all the major markets of the world and is especially able to link across the Atlantic to Brazil and Argentina, as well as to South Africa. Other key attributes include a convenient and extensive network of trade routes and a strong base in finance, manufacturing and service industries. However, Lagos has in the past been described as a ‘failed city’ because of the extreme levels of poverty, poor safety and security, inadequate infrastructure, weak social services and its polluted and vulnerable environment. Whilst many of these problems remain in some form there have been considerable improvements in many key areas.

Lagos State Development Plan

In the last 10 years, the government has embarked on a series of reforms to improve the situation and quality of life in Lagos by addressing apparent infrastructure and public service failings. To date, policy directions for these reforms have been guided by several high level documents – 10-Point Agenda (2003-2007), Lagos State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LASEEDS, 2005-2007), Transforming the Lagos State Government (2009), Lagos Vision 20:2020 and Strategic Management Framework – based on detailed sector strategies. The state government also acts on internationally and locally agreed development efforts, such as the Millennium Development Goals, the Development Agenda for Western Nigeria and the Ehingbeti (Economic) Summits.

The state government recognised that to achieve state-wide reforms, a long-term strategic development plan was needed that brought together all current and historical development approaches together under one roof and also addressed any gaps. A long term plan is also important to attract investment from the private sector and international partners.

The Lagos State Development Plan (LSDP) harmonises all these previous and existing policies and plans. It was prepared and formally approved by the state’s highest decision making body, the Executive Council. The plan expresses the political leadership’s clear vision for Lagos in 2025 as:

“Africa’s Model Megacity and global, economic and financial hub that is safe, secure, functional and productive.”

The LSDP identifies ‘Four Development Pillars’ through which government departments and services, as well as the private sector, work together to achieve a shared vision.

Cutting across the pillars are issues of governance, finance, gender and social inclusion, and monitoring and evaluation.

Developing the LSDP

To get to this point of plan approval has not been easy. Following initial collection of evidence, review of various policy documents and situational analysis, a zero draft of the plan was produced by the Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget (MEPB) in 2011. The following year, SPARC was invited by the government to facilitate the production of a final version of the LSDP and address any shortcomings of the first version.

The process was led by the state government with SPARC providing technical assistance and capacity building. Support from the top was an essential prerequisite for the success of this initiative. The Commissioner of MEPB and the Head of Service provided early backing for the initiative. Senior politicians provided direction on the overall purpose, objectives and outline of the plan, and assisted in obtaining technical and administrative input into the process. A good working relationship was established with the managers and technical officers in core ministries which helped in information gathering to accurately reflect the current situation, stakeholders’ needs and projections. Development priorities such as the state’s 10-Point Agenda and LASEEDS were vigorously debated among all stakeholders at Ehingbeti and other platforms.

The planning teams made strenuous efforts to ensure that at each stage the LSDP was verified, adapted and approved by key stakeholders in core state institutions through a series of facilitated discussions.

The ‘Four Development Pillars’ of the Lagos State Development Plan

- **Economic growth:**
  - A dynamic, expanding economy

- **Social development and security:**
  - An educated, skilled and healthy people

- **Infrastructure development:**
  - An efficient and effective infrastructure meeting the city’s needs

- **Sustainable environment:**
  - A green, clean and safe city that sustains its environment

Cross cutting issues:
- Gender, social inclusion, HIV/AIDS
- Finance, governance, capacity building
- Monitoring and evaluation, review

The ‘Four Development Pillars’ of the Lagos State Development Plan
Facing tomorrow

The plan by itself will achieve nothing. Results will come through action. Therefore, the planning teams are working on an implementation programme to identify those actions and responsibilities which will ensure that the plan is implemented; it becomes a mechanism for realising the vision for Lagos in 2025.

The implementation programme will primarily concentrate upon how the Lagos State administration can effectively integrate the LSDP into its existing planning and budgetary systems. It will also ensure that the performance of the LSDP is monitored on the basis of a comprehensive results framework based on clear outcomes, key performance indicators and targets.

Main challenges and important lessons learned

Developing LSDP proved challenging. But the team were keen to identify success factors, capture and disseminate this information for the use of others involved in this field.

The main challenges and lessons learnt were:

- **Political leadership** is an essential pre-requisite for the success of any reform initiative.
- Building understanding of the need for reforms and readiness of the system to accept change, to embrace them and work together on implementing them across government is an important part of bringing about positive changes to service delivery.
- **Achieving ownership** (both political and administrative) – the success of developing and implementing the plan will lie with people who work in government departments. It is therefore critical to obtain the full buy-in and commitment of everyone from the start.
- **Removing obstacles** to functional reforms and restructuring through open dialogue will help to build a shared vision and responsibility for the success of the plan.
- It is important to identify and mobilise a capable core group equipped with adequate technical expertise to drive forward the process.
- **Close collaboration and open communication** between key government departments is important; the core group needs to manage the relationship between different departments, provide capacity building as necessary and have a clear and systematic communication strategy.
- **Maintaining momentum** of change reforms is a difficult task; delays in finalising the process due to bureaucratic obstacles, unavailability of key players, difficulties in obtaining reliable data, etc. – all impact negatively on the pace of a progress. A balance needs to be found between a flexible timeframe (time for data collection and validation, for example) and maintaining a good pace of progress.
- **Wider representation:** Preparing development policy frameworks needs to be consultative and participatory, involving all sectors of the government involved in service delivery as well as non-state actors; this promotes a stronger understanding and shared vision. Participatory processes also provide valuable feedback, create ownership of the outcomes and open channels for accountability and transparency, which in return motivates reforms further.
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