

PAVING THE WAY TO SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

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Your quarterly roundup of news and insights on all things **Infrastructure Asset Management (IAM)** from across the United Nations system and beyond. Part of the joint IAM initiative of the UN Capital Development Fund, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UN Office for Project Services.



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IAM UN HIGHLIGHTS

HIGHLIGHT: The IAM UN Team, in partnership with the UN Institute for Training and Research and Columbia University, has launched the *Infrastructure Asset Management for Sustainable Development* Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), making expert guidance and field-tested tools freely available to governments and other stakeholders to support capacity development for effective asset management. The 8-module course comprises interactive lessons with audio and visual elements and will be available on Coursera/edx to further leverage e-learning tools. Register here:

<https://bit.ly/IAM-MOOC>

MORE:

- Four contributors of the *Managing Infrastructure Assets* handbook discuss the publication and explain why IAM is essential to SDG achievement in the *Managing Infrastructure Assets to Finance Sustainable Development* episode (32min) of UNCDF's *Capital Musings* podcast. Listen to it here: <https://bit.ly/3rWyGW8>
- Nearly 600 participants of the [UN Online Solutions Dialogues workshops](#) held between February and April of this year worked individually or with colleagues to devise an *Asset Management Action Plan* or 'AMAP'. Explore the map [here](#) to see where in the world 186 (and counting) AMAPs have already been developed.



FEATURE



LINDA NEWTON (CD, Ph.D., FCSCE, PMP) is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Carleton University and now has her own consulting firm, Linda Newton Consulting, with a focus on strategic asset management. She is the lead author of the *Fundamentals* half of the *Managing Infrastructure Assets* handbook, and also a member of the IAM UN expert team.

Q. For those who have not browsed the handbook yet or attended any asset management workshops, how would you define infrastructure asset management?

A. In the simplest terms, it's how to plan for and take care of the infrastructure assets we have so that they will continue to provide services now and in the future. It means we need to understand the current and future demand for assets, how to look after them until we need to dispose of them, and how to make the best financial decisions knowing that we can't afford to do everything.

The [UN Handbook on Asset Management](#) defines *infrastructure assets* as **all physical assets that are essential to the delivery of basic public services**.

Such assets include **traditional infrastructure facilities**, like roads and water and sanitation systems, as well as the **land** that roads are built on, the **buildings** that house essential services and the **equipment and information technology systems** needed to operate and maintain them.

Q. Who should care about it, and why?

A. We should all care! Why? Collectively, we are the owners of our public assets. We all benefit from the services assets provide and we all play a role in how they are managed. The asset management team ensures services provided by critical assets are always available. They can not do this without the input of the public who provide input on what services they perceive are needed and why. Finally, the finance team ensures the asset management plan is financially sustainable and public funds are well spent.

Q. In your visits to pilot municipalities across Bangladesh, Nepal, Tanzania and Uganda, what did you find most and least surprising about how asset management is perceived, discussed and carried out?

A. I think the most surprising was the perception that at the highest levels, asset management is only about financing, and obtaining grants or loans to acquire new assets. We always had to ask the local government to include development staff and engineering staff in the workshops. The important role these groups play in asset management was not understood.

What I found the least surprising was the belief that a municipality needed asset management software to carry out infrastructure asset management. Many of our discussions on challenges would begin with, "We need software," without understanding asset management basics. We had quite the discussion that software was something that could help you, but you first needed to understand why asset management was important and what it involved. Software won't tell you what you need to better manage assets.

Q. How do the Asset Management Diagnostic Tool and Action Plans, which you helped develop, support governments in taking that critical first step to more effective asset management?

A. The great thing about the Diagnostic Tool and the Action Plans is that they are designed to teach the 'why' and 'what' of asset management and then lead into the 'how'. The 14 fundamental questions in the Tool introduce the concept of asset management to local governments and provide a simple means to assess awareness. Based on the responses, local governments can develop actions to improve their asset management. The Action Plans support taking that critical first step as they provide a map showing how to get from where you are now in managing your assets to where you want to be.

POINT OF VIEW



FRANCIS BYABAGAMBI is an experienced public service practitioner who has served in different roles in local governments and urban administration across Uganda. He also led the development and implementation of the Asset Management Diagnostic Tool and AMAPs in Uganda. He is now Town Clerk and Chief Executive of Nansana Municipal Council.

We invited Francis to share his insights and recommendations on ways to enhance stakeholder engagement - including attracting stakeholders who aren't currently involved - for asset management. This was his response:



✓ ORGANIZE **STAKEHOLDER CONFERENCES** TO GENERATE IDEAS AND BUILD CONSENSUS ON ASSET IDENTIFICATION, PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION.

✓ FORM **USER GROUPS** (E.G. VIA WHATSAPP) TO SHARE INFORMATION.

✓ ORGANIZE **PUBLIC MEETINGS** ('BARAZAS' AS THEY'RE KNOWN IN EAST AFRICA) TO EXPLAIN ACTIONS AND JUSTIFY DECISIONS.

✓ ESTABLISH **FEEDBACK AND ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS** THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA, COMMUNITY NOTICE BOARDS, BOOKLETS, WEBSITES, ETC.

✓ FORM **COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES** TO CULTIVATE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS PROJECTS AND RESOLVE ANY DISPUTES.

✓ EMPLOY **LOCAL RESOURCES** FOR THE PROJECT (E.G. LABOUR, MATERIALS, VEHICLES, ETC.) TO FOSTER COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP OF THE PROJECT.

IAM IRL #1

CAUTION! FLYING TEST TUBES

Good infrastructure asset management ensures accessibility of assets throughout their lifecycle, including in times of crises. As a case in point, Ghana has used an ingenious solution to ensure accessibility of their healthcare facilities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since April 2020, Ghana has been using drones to transport COVID-19 test samples between healthcare facilities in rural areas and laboratories in Accra and Kumasi, the country's two largest cities. This innovative development is the continuation of a solution already operating in the country where over 600 transfers of blood samples are undertaken among 500 hospitals daily.

The pandemic created an opportunity to extend a contract between the Ghanaian government and Zipline, the startup owning the drone network. As a result, 22 million people have easier access to medical testing without the risk of long-distance travel, in turn reducing the spread of the virus.

This solution maximized the service value of the already existent framework - one of the key components of effective IAM.

Read more in the European Investment Bank's [Africa's digital solutions to tackle COVID-19 report](#) in collaboration with UNDP.



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IAM IRL #2

THAT'S BRILLIANT

Sound infrastructure asset management takes into consideration the interconnectedness effects of assets. In Zambia, the upgrading of energy infrastructure assets through solar power has had a markedly positive effect on health-related infrastructure, especially since the onset of the pandemic.

Medical Stores Limited, the governmental agency responsible for the storage and distribution of pharmaceuticals, invested in the installation of photovoltaic and temperature control systems in their warehouses. Their use of solar energy, which is in abundance in the country, guarantees an undisturbed supply of energy even without hydropower from the national grid. Not only has this prevented medication from getting spoiled; patients gain better access to treatment and the healthcare system can run more smoothly.

Smart asset management ensures continuity of operation of the infrastructure we possess and reduces barriers to its utilization.

Read more about UNDP's *Solar for Health* initiative [here](#).



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