

**HABITAT BUSINESS AWARD**

**THE ADOPT-A-LIGHT PROJECT**



**REPORT ON BEST PRACTICE**

**SUBMISSION FOR**

**HABITAT BUSINESS AWARD FOR SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION**

By Adopt A Light Ltd  
P O Box 70171 – 00400  
Nairobi, Kenya

April 2009

# Habitat Business Award

## Best Practice Report

### 1- BEST PRACTICE IDENTIFICATION

Slum and Street Lighting Initiative in Kenya by Adopt A Light Ltd

### 2 - Contact Person:

Title: Ms  
Last Name: Passaris  
First Name: Esther  
Job title: Founder/Chairperson

### 3- COMPANY PROFILE

Company Name: ADOPT A LIGHT LTD  
Address line 1: P. O. BOX 70171  
City: NAIROBI  
Postal Code: 00400  
Country: KENYA  
Telephone (including country code): 254 020 826181 or 254 020 826182  
Fax (Including country code): 254 020 825199  
Email address: info@adopt-a-light.com  
Website: www.adopt-a-light.com  
Year of establishment: 2002  
Number of employees: (in 2009) 50

Annual revenues for the last five years:

	<u>US Dollars</u>
2008:	1,737,161.00
2006:	2,589,684.00
2005:	1,889,304.00
2004:	1,209,596.00
2003:	962,845.00

Note: Exchange rate applied is 1US Dollar = 80 Kenya shillings

### 4 - INDUSTRY SECTOR

Infrastructure

### 5 - CORPORATE MISSION

The company's mission is to improve the quality of people's lives by ensuring that public spaces - slums, streets, parks, neighborhoods etc - remain well lit after sunset through an effective partnership between the private and public sectors to finance and facilitate the installation and maintenance of lights and is so doing improve security, safety and aesthetics of public areas, enabling populations to more fully enjoy their lives and participate in economic and recreational activity, while at the same time providing financial sponsors with quality advertising services.

**6 - MEMBERSHIP** to voluntary initiatives and business associations

Member of the Nairobi Central Business Association - an association of businesses and business people in Nairobi working and advocating for the improvement of the physical, regulatory and policy environment necessary businesses to thrive in Nairobi.

**7 - CATEGORY** of the Best Practice

Sustainable water, sanitation waste management and urban infrastructure solutions.

**8 - PARTNERS**

List of significant partners that are involved in the best practice:

1. a/ Name of Organization City Council of Nairobi  
b/ Address of the Organisation P. O Box 30075, Nairobi Kenya  
c/ Type of Organisation: Local Authority
2. a/ Name of Organisation Over 100 private sector enterprises/  
businesses in Kenya who have adopted light  
poles and light masts.  
b/ Address of the Organisation Examples include:  
Access Kenya, P O Box 43586 - 00100 Nairobi  
Toyota, P.O. Box 3391 - 00506 Nairobi  
Barclays Bank, P O Box 30120 - 00100 Nairobi  
Zain Ltd, P O Box 73146 - 00200 Nairobi  
c/ Type of Organisation: Private Sector
3. a/ Name of Organisation Kenya Parliament (Constituency Development  
Fund). Examples include: Starehe, Naivasha,  
Tetu, & Langata Constituencies  
b/ Address of the Organisation P O Box 41842 Nairobi, Kenya  
c/ Type of Organisation: Central Government Agencies
4. a/ Name of Organisation Local Communities Residing in the Slums  
b/ Address of the Organisation Not applicable  
c/ Type of Organisation: Communities
5. a/ Name of Organisation Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan  
(LASDAP)  
b/ Address of the Organisation P O Box 30004 00100 GPO  
c/ Type of Organisation: Local Authority

**9 - BUSINESS GOAL**

To enlist the contribution and participation of as many partners as possible, primarily from the private sector, to achieve sustainable financing of installation and maintenance of efficient public lighting infrastructure in slums, streets and other public areas to reduce crime, enhance road safety and improve the environment for carrying out business and social-economic activities. To beautify roadsides and improve the street environment through gardening and provision of litter bins and helping address the problem of street families through provision of gainful employment. To provide sponsors - those adopting light poles and masts - with unique

outdoor advertising opportunities and services as they contribute towards development of public infrastructure.

## **10 - MARKET COVERAGE and TARGET GROUP**

The current phase of the project aims at lighting all the slums and streets of Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya with a population of 3.0 million people of whom approximately 2.0 million reside in some 160 slums scattered all over Nairobi. Through the slum lighting initiative the company has put up masts in Nyeri town, Central province and Naivasha town in the Rift Valley province. Plans to introduce the concept to other major towns in Kenya and to other countries in Eastern Africa. The company has developed a wide range of outdoor advertising products to suit both large and small companies and institutions that financially sponsor the installation of slum lighting masts and street poles.

## **11 - BUSINESS CONTEXT**

Before the initiative, slum lighting infrastructure in Kenya was non-existent while the then few existing streetlights were decaying due to neglect as the local government lacked resources. Insecurity, road accidents and other social economic problems associated with unlit areas were rampant. However, nobody was coming up with ideas to tackle the problem. On the other hand, paid for advertising on roadside structures such as billboards, sign boards, banners etc were common. The initiative recognized that the need for outdoor advertising could be exploited to provide a sustainable financing solution for lighting infrastructure development. A large pool of advertisers - corporate entities, organizations and individuals - could sponsor the installation of lighting infrastructure and benefit from having their advertisement hosted on the "adopted" a slum high-mast or streetlight pole at a fee.

Main challenges included: a) to convince the City Council of Nairobi - a bureaucratic institution mandated to provide street lighting - to allow the initiative to step in; b) to introduce and successfully sell the new concept of adopting a light to a large pool of financial sponsors; c) to identify a suitable lighting system for Kenya's densely crammed slums; and d) to obtain/negotiate access to sites in slums to erect high-masts.

## **12 - PROCESS**

The company founder on visits to South Africa had identified the business potential of street pole advertising but since the local authorities in Kenya, unlike in other countries, were not installing light poles, she formulated a concept where, under a public-private partnership, the initiative would raise funds through advertising to help finance the installation and maintenance of lighting infrastructure. She researched on the viability of the project by assessing needs, investment cost implications and the potential for raising funds from sponsors and advertisers. She then made proposals and presentations to the City Council of Nairobi, convincing it to allow the company to step in and provide the service under a public-private partnership arrangement.

After approval by the Council, the founder from own resources raised seed capital; the project undertook an aggressive campaign to introduce the concept of adopt-a-light convincing advertisers (companies, organizations and advertising agencies) on the effectiveness and benefits of supporting the project; identified suitable suppliers of materials; set up engineering and administrative capacity both in terms of manpower and equipment; and also identified a lighting system suitable for dense slum conditions where space is a premium and concerns about potential vandalism abound. Having researched on the available modes of lighting, the high masts were selected as the most appropriate, least disruptive and cost effective means to light up slum areas

as opposed to the normal light poles. The problem that remained was how to access the various mast sites given lack of roads. This problem was solved through a process of consultation with the local elders, chiefs, councilors and other community leaders with local residents agreeing to create access paths while persons who had to relocate their structures were compensated.

### **13 - ASSETS**

The initiative is a public-private partnership between the City Council of Nairobi and Adopt a Light Ltd operating largely on business principles. The Council apart from providing the legal and political framework for the initiative to operate was during in the initial period expected to provide some technical support in terms of its electrical engineers providing advisory support, availing aerial platform trucks to assist in the installations, and paying the electricity bills. The company (private partner) purchased materials such as poles, lanterns, high masts and advertising boards; provided transport vehicles; operated an equipped workshop; paid for labor; provided managerial and administrative services; paid for rented office and storage space; developed marketing materials and paid for promotion; and meeting part of the cost of the electricity consumed for slum and street lighting. Being a private company, the shareholders, had to provide the start-up capital from own personal resources. After demonstrating commercial success, the initiative has been able to get banks to advance commercial loans.

### **14 - REVENUE STREAMS**

The initiative obtains funds from corporate entities, organizations and individuals who sponsor the installation of light poles or high masts and benefit from having their advertisement hosted on the adopted light pole or mast for a determined period (based on the value of the sponsorship). The project also gets organizations to sponsor the installation of infrastructure particularly in slums not necessary for advertising but as a social service to the community. Funds generated from renewal of pole/mast adoptions and from sites that are more attractive to advertisers are used to subsidize expansion to other areas.

### **15 - ACHIEVEMENTS**

The initiative is ongoing. Achievements include:

It has installed 3,000 streetlights along 50 streets covering an estimated 150km of roads used by millions of motorists and pedestrians daily. It has erected 33 high mast lights in several slums serving over 150,000 households or an approximate population of 500,000 persons. Some city streets have been beautified through gardening and provided with litter bins. 50 persons some of whom were former members of street families are employed. Its success has highlighted the potential benefits of public-private partnerships and opened doors for their implementation.

A study conducted by an independent research organization, Steadman Group in 2006 found that the slum lighting initiative has generated the following results:

- Has improved security in the slums. Residents now feel safer; report fewer breaking-ins and muggings; can now walk home late without risking harassment and rape.
- Has enabled business people to extend opening hours and hence improve sales.
- Residents can now do certain tasks such as cooking outside at night thus reducing their expenditure on house lighting.
- Children are able to stay out and play longer in the evenings.
- Some of the children are now reading under the high mast lights.
- Social life has improved with residents able to host visitors for longer hours in the evenings.
- Improved access to toilets at night enhancing hygiene.

- The initiative is most appreciated by women, children and business people.

On account of the success of this initiative, the company has been invited to several seminars and forums on the subject of urban infrastructure development, urban issues, and on public-private partnerships.

The company's performance has won the following awards:-

- Mayoral Achievement Award by the City Council of Nairobi
- National Road Safety Award by the National Road Safety Agency
- Mashariki innovation in Local Governance Awards (MILGAP) by UN Habitat
- Company of the Year Award by Kenya Institute of Management (KIM)
- Make a Difference Award by Good News Production International Africa

## 16 - KEY DATES

July - September 2001: Research on the project.

October 2001: Proposal presented to City Council for consideration.

March 2002: Proposal accepted by the Council, a Project Agreement between the City Council and the company signed.

August 2002: Implementation of street lighting commenced.

December 2005: Slum lighting masts introduced.

## 17 - IMPACTS

Impacts include:

- (i) Security in the slums has improved, crime reduced - fewer breaking-ins, muggings, harassment of women and children, and rape.
- (ii) Environment for conduct of business particularly for the micro and small enterprises in slums has improved.
- (iii) Has improved road safety reducing accidents particularly those involving pedestrians and cyclists.
- (iv) Many local authorities are now inviting private sector to participate in street lighting and in provision of other infrastructure and services.
- (v) The improved security and visibility enables slum residents to safely access the communal toilets at night, greatly improving hygiene and minimizing threat of communicable diseases.
- (vi) By financing lighting infrastructure and paying bills for lighting (in excess of US dollars 6.0 million), the project has saved the City Council money allowing the local authority to focus on other areas of need such as education, health and garbage collection.
- (vii) Contributed towards poverty reduction through employment and linkages through purchases of materials.
- (viii) The roads are more beautiful while litter bins have improved cleanliness.
- (ix) Thousands of petty traders now able to sell their wares along pathways in lit slums.

- (x) Advertising on slum high-masts has provided advertisers with an ideal media for reaching the large slum populations.
- (xi) Has introduced the high-mast as an effective, efficient, low maintenance system for lighting slums and public areas.

## 18 - SUSTAINABILITY

Financial sustainability has been assured by successfully promoting the adopt-a-light concept to advertisers. The number of sponsors has increased to just over 100 currently, attracted by the positive social impact of the initiative and the effectiveness of its advertising services. The company generates some profit and has access to commercial bank facilities.

The initiative has established firm business relationship with suppliers, such as the supplier of high-masts, ensuring access to latest energy and cost efficient technologies.

The initiative is based on a long-term (10 year renewable agreement) with the City Council. The partners continue to work at maintaining a good relationship. Working closely with community leaders in the slum areas, the initiative maintains the goodwill and support of the public.

The project uses energy efficient lanterns, and the most efficient method of lighting slums. The landscaping, gardening, and cleaning activities have improved the environment.

## 19 - LESSONS LEARNED

- a. **The underprivileged areas need not be left out.** The underprivileged deserve to live in safe and secure environments. The initiative figured a way to serve them and allowed cross-subsidization - the more popular highways subsidizing the less profitable areas such as slums.
- b. **Importance of Community participation** - Local communities can be supportive of initiatives that positively impact their lives but consultation with them and stakeholders is essential if resistance, misunderstanding, unnecessary delay and costs are to be avoided. This ensures smooth implementation of slum lighting and guarantees security of project assets.
- c. **Well structured public-private partnership can deliver.** The government is now creating the necessary legal instruments in this area and a number of councils have now invited the private sector to partner in garbage collection, parking, street lighting etc. Private investors are now more willing to participate. It has shown that the private sector and the wider community can be mobilized to help finance public infrastructure.

## 20 - REFERENCES

<http://www.adopt-a-light.com>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/nairobis-lady-of-the-lamp-453276.html>

<http://www.lightingacademy.org/news.php?pcode=0000000412>

[http://www.korogocho.org/english/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=519:light-in-korogocho-by-daniel-onyango&catid=50:korogocho-info](http://www.korogocho.org/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=519:light-in-korogocho-by-daniel-onyango&catid=50:korogocho-info)

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