Ethiopian Cities Association

Communication and Advocacy Strategy

2022-2026

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Executive Summary

This communication and advocacy strategy of Ethiopian Cities Association (ECA) is developed to provide a framework that will guide communications and advocacy in the areas that ECA intends to work on in the 2022-2026 strategic period. To contribute in achieving ECA's desired goal, this communication and advocacy strategy has adopted key aspects from ECA's strategic plan 2022-2026, which is 5 years strategic plans and mainly focuses on urban development sector. It also further theorizes intermediate outcomes for the network's successful advocacy towards influencing policies related to urban development issues.

ECA's strategic plan (2022-2026) elaborates convener role of the ECA secretariat and of the member cities respectively. Reflecting on the current political economy analysis, the strategic plan unpacks assessment of risks and proposed risk management. It further features component of monitoring, evaluation and learning plan for effective monitoring of ECA member cities activities related to policy processes with a specific focus on public money accountability. This strategy is divided into three sections as follows: Introduction, about the communication and advocacy strategy, and advocacy issues. Introduction of this strategy entails ECA's vision, mission, values and long-term organization impact that ECA is intending to achieve. The second section is about the communication and advocacy strategy, it defines the objectives of the strategy and principles. It also describes internal and external partners of ECA and means of communication. Internal and external partners are the essential part of ECA's existence. Messages expected to reach for these partners are explicitly outlined and explained in this section. The last section is about advocacy issues and justification for engagements. This strategy outlines advocacy issues that need to be addressed. This part includes a matrix of the advocacy issues with outputs and activities that contribute towards achieving ECA's advocacy goal.

1. Introduction

Ethiopian Cities Association's (ECA's) communication and advocacy strategy provides an overview of the contribution of communication to support the promotion of good practices and experience sharing for its member cities, to raise awareness and support the creation of strategic and operational partnerships for city development.

ECA's communications and advocacy strategy is developed to provide a framework to guide communication and advocacy activities related to the interventions facilitated by ECA in support of governments, governmental and non-governmental institutions and partners from Ethiopia as well as in Africa. It is based on the conviction that to support the objectives of ECA's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, ECA must be committed to forward-thinking and strategic communications. As such, it must communicate strategically to increase the visibility and scope of the initiatives that it facilitates by using tools and evidence-based messaging, designed to engage target audiences and partners in order to capitalize on efforts in support of good governance and decentralization in member cities. The strategy will contribute to strengthening the identity and positioning of ECA.

This communication and advocacy strategy has four objectives and aims to contribute to visibility and promotion of the ECA's activities and knowledge products; to identify, document and disseminate information on what works and to increase engagement among the ECA's over 70 member cities and with the media. The communications and advocacy strategy will orient communications activities to engage with member states, partners, regional networks and other relevant urban development sector stakeholders.

1.1 About Ethiopian Cities Association (ECA)

ECA was founded in 2009 by 19 founding member cities. Its establishment came as a response to the need for better service delivery in Ethiopian cities, and to disseminate and exchange experiences among them. Whilst its establishment received much positive feedback initially, its invisibility together with the fact that it has not yet succeeded in positioning itself as a strong national player with the potential to influence policy making at the national level, has undermined original expectations. Although more urban stakeholders have heard of ECA, there is still very little awareness about the organization and its potential contribution, if applied correctly, to urban development in Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian Cities Association (ECA) is currently an alliance of over 70 Ethiopian cities working towards improving the living conditions of the urban population. It is a voluntary membership organization owned by and accountable to its members and has as its mission to provide tailored capacity building and networking services. The Association serves as an urban development platform for learning, knowledge-exchange, and dialogue; undertakes advocacy and liaison; and promotes partnerships and collaboration toward transformation and growth. The aim of the ECA is to support city administrations in their quest to deliver better services to their citizens.

1.2 Vision

To be an association of cities that can add value for the making of livable, sustainable, productive and competitive Ethiopian cities.

1.3 Mission

To support cities in achieving their mission, complying with principles of good governance and decentralization

1.4 Core Values

- Excellence
- Professionalism
- Innovative
- Independence
- Teamwork
- Inclusiveness
- Dynamic

2. About ECA's Communication and Advocacy Strategy

For the last ten years ECA has been working to influence policies that have direct impact to the quality of life in Ethiopian cities dwellers. In doing so, ECA has and will continue to engage strategically with diverse stakeholders who have direct and indirect contribution in achieving ECA's goals. These stakeholders range from governmental officials, legislators, local government leaders, likeminded organizations, and media as well as development partners. Since ECA engages with such diverse stakeholders, it is important to have a communication and advocacy strategy that states ECA's position, areas of focus and means of communicating to achieve long term goals.

This communication and advocacy strategy is an update of the 2015-2016 Ethiopian Cities Association communication strategy. The current communication and advocacy strategy intends to guide ECA's communication and advocacy interventions as per its operational plan for 2022 –

2026. It identifies general goal and what should be done to achieve ECA's outcomes outlined in its five year strategic plan of ECA, 2022-2026.

2.2 Purpose of the Communication and Advocacy Strategy of ECA

This communications and advocacy strategy of ECA aims to garner visibility and increased participation of ECA's member cities. The strategy will:

- Provide information and advocacy for ECA member cities at national and regional levels;
- Produce advocacy and information, education and communication (IEC) materials for its member cities;
- Engage the media;
- Document good practices and key lessons learnt;

2.3 Objectives

To achieve its purpose, the communications and advocacy strategy of ECA has four detailed objectives, as outlined below:

- Ensure visibility of ECA in the global urban sector and in each of the 70 member cities and its alignment to national, regional, continental and international urban agendas and priorities,
- Ensure the documenting of best practices and lessons learnt which will be synthesized and shared across member cities;
- Support operations research, generation of new evidence or data across member cities; as well as the dissemination of results from the baseline, mid-term and final project evaluations;
- Contribute to the development and design of ECA communication and advocacy materials, such as presentations, articles, abstracts and posters in the context of knowledge management and participate in the presentation of these products to various audiences to ensure that the work of ECA is well documented and publicized.

This strategy strives to be as holistic as possible; therefore each objective is accompanied by a number of aligned activities, operationalization practices and benchmarking procedures to ensure successful implementation.

2.4 Communication and Advocacy Principles

These principles aim to guide ECA's Communication and Advocacy works:

- ECA's advocacy works are a continuum of interventions ranging from constructive engagement from one extreme to litigation on the other;
- ECA's communication and advocacy works will be evidence based;
- Gender will be mainstreamed in all ECA's communication and advocacy works;
- Communication and Advocacy works will be non-partisan;
- ECA will strategically implement communication and advocacy activities towards specific stakeholder groups;

2.5 Key Components of the Communications and Advocacy Strategy of ECA

2.5.1 Vision

The vision for the Communications and Advocacy Strategy of ECA is to ensure the visibility of ECA and to increase the number of ECA member cities and relevant partners' engagement in its activities.

This strategy will leverage diverse communications channels and tools and utilize clear and attractive multimedia; seek to reach all segments of its target audience; remain participatory in nature and build on the strengths and comparative advantages of ECA's potential partners and member cities.

2.5.2 Situation analysis

The situation analysis below lays the foundation of this document. The first part focuses on ECA's organizational background and outlines challenges that have contributed to its low

visibility on the urban organizational landscape. An identification of those challenges is essential as the communication objectives of the communication plan will be derived from them. The second part of this chapter takes a closer look at communication achievements and challenges.

2.5.2.1 Organizational Background

As mentioned above, ECA was founded in 2009 by 19 founding member cities. Its establishment came as a response to the need for better service delivery in Ethiopian cities, and to disseminate and exchange experiences among them. Whilst its establishment received much positive feedback initially, its invisibility together with the fact that it has not yet succeeded in positioning itself as a strong national player with the potential to influence policy making at the national level, has undermined original expectations. Although more urban stakeholders have heard of ECA, there is still very little awareness about the organization and its potential contribution, if applied correctly, to urban development in Ethiopia.

As an organization whose financial survival rests solely on the shoulders of its member cities and the acquisition of funds/grants from international organizations, intermittent commitment of both, in terms of human resource and financial support, has created a rather shaky financial fundament. In other words, while ECA is capable of providing some of its services, such as workshops and a booth at the Ethiopian Urban Forum, it cannot extend its activities to covering international experience exchanges or membership fees with relevant international Institutions. In spite of the fact that the Association's mission statement is filled with important activities, few of them are properly implemented. For instance, best practices are gathered and presented during experience exchange workshops, although little attention in this regard is given to creativity and innovation. Discussion forums have been merged into workshops, while study visits rarely take place. Trainings occur on a regular basis, although the relevancy to members' needs is questionable at times. Networking and cooperation with likeminded international city

associations and participation in international experience and information exchange platforms have taken the backseat for the moment due to budget constraint. The last point is particularly unfortunate as international interest in the organization is slowly growing and with it opportunities for partnerships and/or exchange. In the past, correspondences with personnel from these international institutions, however, led to an impasse as a result of budget constraints and lengthy decision making processes within ECA.

While all of the above limitations are directly linked to financial resources, the Association's inability to establish itself as a national urban player as of yet, in turn, is linked to the limited activities it proffers, and thus diminishing credibility (also amongst its members), and management inadequacies. These inadequacies are reflected in slow decision-making processes, infrequent board meetings, unavailability of individuals, inadequate monitoring & evaluation, etc. ECA has yet to prove itself as a forceful institution and raise its credibility amongst internal and external stakeholders. The intricacy of this goal lies in the notion that ECA, as an institution, *is* its member cities, hence the latter will have to commit to the Association in order to raise its profile. One way of way doing so, is to encourage member cities to more strongly communicate with one another and the secretariat, in order to create a form of dialogue and establish feedback mechanisms.

As noted before, ECA supports city administrations in their quest to deliver better services to their citizens. Hence, it is primarily city administrations, and by implication, their citizens that benefit from ECA's existence and services. Nevertheless, through the documentation of best practices and the subsequent presentation thereof, local businesses, such as small and micro enterprises (MSEs) gain exposure and have the opportunity to share into a national dialogue on relevant topics. A more intense exchange between industries would be commendable but needs considerable planning and perhaps a revision of activities proffered.

The fact that ECA is the sole player of its kind within the Ethiopian urban organizational landscape offers both opportunities and challenges. Opportunities, because it responds to a clearly stated need for improved service delivery, falling under the umbrella term of good governance, and the potential readiness of international organizations to support a local infant organization working in this area. If harnessed correctly, the financial support of these organizations, together with a proclaimed moral backing, could help ECA gain bargaining power vis à vis the national government and thus establish it as a credible actor in the sphere of urban development. At the same time, however, many of ECA's challenges arise from its aforementioned infancy status and a political landscape that is not always encouraging of independent organizations. While there is no open hostility, past experiences have made it clear that ECA needs to succeed in "buying in" government to be able to operate autonomously and in accordance with its mandate. One step in this direction is to raise its profile and visibility nationally through increased communication activities and campaigns. Increased activity in this regard will lead to more interest in the organization from within Ethiopia and beyond. More interest could open up new venues for fund acquisition and a broadened membership and partnership base. This, in turn, would lead to more inclusive and sustainable operations and hence the institutionalization of ECA as a national player in urban development. Improved communications, thus, is the key element in a process towards sustainability.

2.5.2.2 Situation Analysis: ECA Communications

2.5.2.2.1 Achievements

ECA's secretariat is currently conducting a communication assessment to develop an understanding of its member cities communication capacities, both in terms of technical knowledge and human resource. The assessment is carried out via questionnaires and informal

discussions between ECA communication officer and focal communication persons from sample cities. So far, the assessment has returned a number of positive revelations. For example, the secretariat learned that all assessed cities have communication departments that are run by governmental communication affairs, with 1 to 3 professionals that work alongside the head of department. Moreover, some cities have a print media outlet that accommodates printed materials, such as brochures, newsletters and magazines. The first returns of the assessment have also shown that some cities have audio visual teams that are connected to TV and Radio stations, which would allow the secretariat to employ and utilize these channels where applicable.

While the need for improved communication facilities and trainings in cities was clearly stated, the existence of working communication departments and motivated staff presents the basic communication infrastructure needed to implement this communication plan.

Below is an overview of what has been achieved since 2012 in terms of communication activities. The main communication activities/outputs that have been carried out by ECA since the endorsement by the board include the following:

- Preparation of the strategic communication plan;
- Purchase of the domain name and development of its website;
- Development of its corporate identity and revision of logo;
- Development of banners, brochures and press kit folder;
- Press releases;
- Setting up of a network of ECA focal members;
- Regular announcements about project developments through e-mail circulars sent to the wider network of focal persons;

- Communication evaluation questionnaires sent to the focal persons;
- Drafting and dissemination of workshop reports;
- The presentation of ECA during the 5th Ethiopian Cities Week;
- The presentation of ECA during the 1st Ethiopian Urban Form (formerly the Ethiopian Cities Week);
- Communication training given to focal persons and ECA secretariat staff;
- Ongoing communication assessment;

2.5.2.3 Challenges

ECA's mandate stipulates that the organization views itself as a facilitator, in that it furthers the exchange of information and experiences among cities and between cities and stakeholders. Nevertheless, despite these objectives, ECA has so far paid little or no priority to the communication aspects of its endeavors. This is due to a lack of experience, staff shortages and a low appreciation or limited understanding of communications. These factors have contributed to the Association operating with a lack of communication channels, both internal and external, to convey its mandate and gain visibility. The notion of serving as a vibrant forum for dialogue has thus not yet been realized, and in turn, threatens to curtail its overall goal of being a platform for experience exchange for Ethiopian cities.

Most stakeholders have recognized the importance of improved communications but have not yet prioritized it. For example, surveys that were distributed amongst member cities to assess communication needs – amongst others – were not returned or returned late. Out of 28 member cities, only 12 cities returned the questionnaires. Although ECA member cities are committed to the cause, that is ECA's mandate, active participation on the part of city officials is limited to partaking in workshops and trainings. The secretariat, charged with handling ECA day-to-day

activities, is often target for much pointed criticism and made responsible for the possible failing of ECA as an institution. While this argument is valid, and much capacity building remains to be done in the secretariat, the low commitment of ECA member cities to lobbying for the institution and making both, human as well as financial resources available, presents a further much neglected fact.

Progress in terms of communication was made with the development of a corporate identity, a new website and public relations package and the hiring of a communication's arm for the secretariat in 2013. Both, the development of a corporate design as well as the remodelling of the website were well received among member cities. However, the development of both products was made possible through grant money, and did not come from ECA's budget. In other words, willingness to invest in high-quality communication materials is still relatively low.

The hiring of a communication officer has produced positive changes in the Association's communication endeavors but much remains to be done. The officer, currently, is the only professional with a communication's background and although journalistically sound, must apply himself to all things considered media. This includes updating the website, making graphic changes to it, serving as a photographer at events, the translation of content etc. Long-term, it would be advisable to outsource the design part of ECAs communication to ensure continued quality of its products.

Although the Association is now operating with a corporate identity and has produced a number of public relation materials, there is no planned or consistent communication. In other words, ECA communicates on an ad hoc basis, and mostly in relation to upcoming events. The result is an inconsistency in relaying information to its members and/or potential partners.

To strengthen the internal exchange and encourage the flow of communication between cities and cities and the secretariat, mayors and deputy majors agreed to establish a network of focal communication persons, appointed by the mayors' offices. Although this may be taken as a positive indicator, the appointments were done haphazardly and initially not carried out by all cities. Also, briefings as to their new mandate were not given, confirmed by those focal persons that were reached by the secretariat.

Presently, ECA struggles with gaining the visibility it needs to advance the realization of its mandate. While member cities know about the association's mandate, this knowledge is mostly limited to city officials who participate in ECA's workshops. Administration staff, cities citizens, Civil Society Organizations, or even federal government departments, know little or nothing about ECA. Hence, the support for the organization rests solely on the shoulders of individuals, who themselves are subject to frequent replacements. Consequently, the need for the establishment of multiple communication channels, the strengthening of internal communication with the aim to commit not one person but a city to ECA's cause, must be a priority.

Communication has often been put forward as the solution to ECAs problem. While it plays an essential role, it is not a patent for success. It does, however, contribute to assuming ownership, building commitment and gaining visibility. Currently, focus should be placed on establishing working communication channels within the institution to strengthen it internally. ECA has neither financial means nor the human capacity to conduct big international visibility campaigns, hence it is recommended to invest in internal capacity building and national visibility campaigns.

2.5.2.4 Key Issues

- A lack of experience, staff shortages and a low appreciation or limited understanding of communications;

- A lack of communication channels, both internal and external;
- Ad hoc communication;
- Low prioritization of communication among ECA member cities;
- Low commitment of ECA member cities to lobbying for the institution and making both, human as well as financial resources available;
- No organizational memory;
- Low visibility;
- Limited knowledge amongst internal and external stakeholders;
- Lack of funding;

2.5.3 ECA's Communication with Internal and External Audiences

2.5.3.1 Internal Target Audience

The internal target audience includes the actors responsible for implementing ECA's daily activities, as well as ECA's grant agents. It responds to the clearly stated need for effective communication within the structure of the Ethiopian Cities Association. It also tackles a number of the key issues relating to a lack of experience, a low appreciation or limited understanding of communications, inadequate communication channels, inconsistent communication and low commitment of ECA member cities to the Association, amongst others. The key element for the success of this internal communication is the collective, collaborative and timely effort on the part of everyone involved. The objectives of this internal communication are directly derived from the issues identified above and support the goal of creating commitment amongst stakeholders to ECA's motto of "cities development for better life".

The objectives of the internal target audience communication guideline are the following:

- To create awareness and inspire commitment to ECA's vision, strategy and activities and thereby help ECA achieve its objectives
- To help create opportunities for dialogue and greater cooperation among ECA member cities
- To facilitate day-to-day work and help increase staff motivation, commitment and solidarity.
- To ensure the exchange of appropriate and timely information among member cities and the secretariat.

The audience of the internal communication is:

- Networking & Communication Director;
- The mayors, deputy mayors and city managers;
- The ECA secretariat staff;

The main communication tools, channels and activities that have or will be utilized to improve internal communication are listed below:

In-person Communication

- Regular secretariat staff meetings
- Regular Board meetings
- Regular General Assembly meetings
- All activities conducted when ECA member city representatives come together in one form or another (e.g. Experience Exchange Workshops, Trainings, Seminars etc)
- Need Assessments
- Bi-annual communication focal person meetings

- Communication Assessments

Printed Communication

- Internal magazine
- Brochure
- Roll up banners
- Reports
- Resource library
- What's New reports
- Event calendar

Information Technology based Communication

- Website
- Contact data base
- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- Telegram

2.5.3.2 External Target Audience

The external target audience includes all urban sector stakeholders operating within the ECA's over 70 member cities. In addition to the regular communications channels, communication with this high-level team will highlight ECA's advancements and seek to collect strategic inputs.

- Urban Development organizations and partner organizations include civil society organizations, NGOs, donor organizations, intergovernmental organizations and local urban development actors.

- All communications with these partners will seek to build partnerships and contribute to inclusive stakeholder involvement in ECA.

The external strategic communication plan is a key ‘vehicle’ for gaining supports from outside the ECA, in order to reach the Association’s goal of serving as a platform for experience exchange and learning among Ethiopian cities, cities worldwide and international stakeholders.

Quite similarly to the Association’s organizational goal, the goal this communication and advocacy strategy seeks to realize is for ECA to become an institutionalized and self-sufficient national platform for experience exchange and learning in Ethiopia. To realize this, it is necessary to mobilize, inspire and hopefully engage all relevant stakeholders and levels of governance whose support is required for the effective implementation of the ECA’s activities, at the local and national levels.

Due to the nature of ECA’s mandate, there is a relatively wide spectrum of target groups that should be reached and involved where applicable. Some of these target groups are relevant to all activities and some are activity specific. Below, all target groups relevant to the Association’s external communication activities are listed:

- External urban stakeholders
- Relevant ministries: Ministry of Urban Development and Infrastructure
- Municipalities and local authorities
- The private sector
- Micro and small enterprises (workshop related)
- Technical staff
- Media

- International Organizations
- NGOs and CSOs
- Universities
- Training institutions
- International local government associations

2.5.4 Communication and Advocacy Tools and Channels

Different channels have been identified to increase the Hub's visibility and secure greater engagement of member states. Here below are lists and describes each of the channels and provides an overview of how the channel will be leveraged within the scope of this Strategy.

- **Social Media**

ECA will continue to use its Facebook, Telegram, LinkedIn, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram and YouTube accounts to communicate with its member cities, partners and the public. ECA recognizes the effectiveness and usefulness of the social media today and it will continue to use social media platforms to share various contents as well as receiving feedback for learning and improvements.

Facebook has more than 212 million users in Africa and the majority accesses the social media site via their mobile phone. Facebook is one of the most widely used social media platforms allowing users to post multimedia and text to share information among a wide audience. Live discussions have also become popular in generating visibility for virtual and in-person events across user communities.

ECA will leverage Facebook by releasing targeted, harmonized messages via its Facebook pages (in accordance with their respective social media policies). Appropriate hashtags and tagging, as well as strategic use of graphics and multimedia, will boost visibility of ECA posts and spread information widely.

Twitter is a social media platform which allows users to share information and multimedia within 280 characters. Similar to Facebook, Twitter is one of the most widely used social media platforms. 71% of Twitter users engage on the platform to follow the news, highlighting Twitter's utility for sharing announcements and information. ECA created its own Twitter and handle to disseminate information, https://twitter.com/CitiesEthiopian. All internal and external partners and member cities accounts will be added as "friends" on Twitter and ECA handle will follow each of these stakeholders' accounts. Ideally, ECA Digital Platform will have a Twitter feed embedded onto its main page to provide further visibility to ECA's Twitter account.

WhatsApp is a platform that allows for individual and group chats for instant messaging. It allows for direct communication among partners and dissemination of information.

WhatsApp is a platform that allows for individual and group chats for instant messaging. It allows for direct communication among partners and dissemination of information. ECA member cities will be invited to join the ECA WhatsApp group, which will act as a listserv for the dissemination of information and exchange between countries and partners. The group will be used strictly for professional purposes.

- **Press Releases**

ECA will communicate through member-led press releases to either promote its activities, engagements, state its position or when there is a topical public issue that requires urgent insight

or clarification from the ECA network. Press releases will be issued in both English and Amharic languages.

ECA will strategically and effectively use various channels to distribute press releases, which include:

- ✓ Email;
- ✓ By hand / in-person;
- ✓ Social media (Facebook, Telegram, Twitter, LimkedIn);
- ✓ Website;
- ✓ Announcement of release on website through SMS to media outlets/journalists.

- **Policy Briefs**

These provide an analysis of various current polices and budget issues. In recent years, we learnt that most of our boundary partners prefer reading these briefs online (softcopies) than receiving printouts. ECA will continue to make sure policy briefs are widely accessed and shared through ECA's website, postal services and social media platforms.

- **Website**

The English and Amharic versions of the website shall be used to share with the general public information on ECA's areas of work. The new website of ECA, which is under development, will be taken seriously as an important source of information for those who can access it. It has been expected that most of website visitors use android phones to access the website. ECA will continue to update its android application to allow users access the content more easily. Gender issues will still be communicated through the website. The ECA website will be a source of information on each national urban sector and ECA's Networking and Communication Directorate will be encouraged to upload relevant ECA's different events and information to its websites, in accordance with their knowledge management procedures. Links between these

sites, and important resources they contain will be established with the KIX Digital Platform so that these documents can live in the digital open access repository.

- **ECA Digital Platform**

The ECA Digital Platform will serve three main functions:

1. to present ECA's activities information,
2. to create a digital knowledge repository and
3. to provide a collaboration space for ECA stakeholders.

All outputs from ECA, as well as existing knowledge products will be added to the digital knowledge repository. News and announcements will be posted on the platform, to ensure ECA gains exposure among global urban development stakeholders. The collaborative space will be leveraged to facilitate working groups, document editing, forums, videoconferencing and more. The Knowledge Management and Communications Directorates will monitor the platform.

- **Monthly Breakfast Debate**

ECA will continue to organize its monthly breakfast debates with intention of proving a platform to its member cities, like-minded organizations/ institutions and individuals to address and make suggestions to improve policy related systemic issues.

- **Attending Conferences, Seminars, Workshops and other Events**

ECA member cities and the staff at the secretariat shall attend external events as part of keeping abreast of developments occurring in different partners and other stakeholders in national development. This will help ECA learn from others and expand the reach of the knowledge gained within its network by showcasing its published materials. Such opportunities need to be used to strengthen solidarity within civil society and seek expansion of ECA network. Once staff or ECA member cities have attended these events they will write reports of the same and also share during the staff meetings.

- **Urban Events (national and global)**

Urban events include conferences, exhibitions, research publication launches, roundtables, advocacy forums, donor forums, International forums and other events that bring together urban stakeholders. ECA Secretariat and ECA's Networking and Communication Directorate will leverage different education events to display and generate visibility for ECA by hosting side events, presenting ECA outputs, gathering information and networking among stakeholders, particularly among researchers.

- **Local and National Media Outlets**

Local media outlets in the 70 member states, as well as those covering in national level will be leveraged to share information on ECA and its progress.

ECA's Networking and Communication Directorate and ECA Secretariat will compile a list and make introductions to important media outlets at local and national levels. The Networking and Communication and Knowledge Management and Resource Mobilization Directorate will maintain these relationships, sharing information on ECA events and achievements and inviting these actors to participate and learn about the ECA.

- **Email**

Communication by email is very effective and affordable means of getting members informed about ECA's activities especially on short notice. Some of the members, however, do not read their emails on time and some of them due to financial constraints do not have the facilities such as computers and Internet services. Therefore, when an urgent communication is needed, the telephone shall be used. In order for members to get information such as invitation to working group meetings, quarterly meetings, breakfast debates and Annual General Meeting on time an SMS software application shall be used to send out text messages as a means of overcoming the digital divide challenge. ECA members will be provided some of the relevant information related

to opportunities of jobs/funds available, ECA's advocacy work or information from likeminded partners through weekly updates sent to them by email.

- Monthly Mail Outs

In order to effectively engage ECA's upcountry members, a system of sending out monthly information packs needs to be enhanced. These information packs will include documents such as relevant policy information and reports. Member cities will also be encouraged to give their inputs on how to further strengthen the system so that it becomes more efficient. This will be done during the quarterly meetings through questionnaires that will be developed and shared.

- **ECA Publications**

Ethiopian Cities Association through its Knowledge Management and Resource Mobilization and Networking and Communication Directorate produce a number publications and documents each year. The development of the contents for publications is a collaborative effort however it has to be led by ECA staffs and its member cities experts. ECA experts will be engaged to design the layout of the publications. ECA experts again will engage as an editor and a proofreader to perform grammatical edit and correct errors. Management of publications will be done also by ECA secretariat. This includes:

- ✓ Distribution strategy in collaboration with its member cities;
- ✓ Ordering and reordering of copies from the printers;
- ✓ Uploading of publications to the ECA website;
- ✓ Placement of the appropriate number of hardcopies in ECA store;
- ✓ Placement of publication in other preservation locations as required.

- **Broadcast Media**

Ethiopian Cities Association (ECA) uses broadcast media including TV and radio stations especially community stations to inform various member cities and partners including the public

on current policies and legislative issues related to accountability, transparency, gender, social development goals, public resources and extractive industry. Currently, radio reaches a large Ethiopian population. Therefore, it should be used to reach decision makers and the community especially at the local level. ECA will chose content for TV spots and documentaries. Moreover, the member cities mayors will select community radio stations to air radio programs on areas that fall under ECA's agenda.

2.5.5 Communications and Advocacy Materials of ECA

In conjunction with the communications and advocacy channels and tools, the following materials will be created and employed to achieve the Communications and Advocacy Strategy's four objectives:

- Blog posts
- Concept notes
- Fact sheets
- Infographics
- ECA Information Brief
- ECA invitations
- ECA Powerpoint Introduction Presentation 18
- ECA presentation text
- ECA User Guide
- Media advisories
- Meeting agendas
- Meeting reports
- News articles

- Newsletters
- Policy briefs
- Posters
- Powerpoint presentations
- Press releases
- Social media posts
- Thematic area logos
- Videos
- Webinars

2.5.6 Communications and Advocacy Strategy Activities

To achieve ECA's Communication and Advocacy Strategy's four objectives, a comprehensive description of each communication and advocacy activity is outlined below. Clear linkages are made between the Strategy's activities and operationalization and the resources required to implement each activity.

Objective 1: Ensure visibility of ECA in the global urban development sector and in each of the 70 member cities and its alignment to national, regional and international urban agendas and priorities. The key activities include:

- **Activity 1.1:** Mapping and aligning of ECA advocacy and IEC materials to meet national and global urban agendas
- **Activity 1.2:** Production of factsheets and information briefs on the ECA's activities

ECA information brief has been developed to introduce and present its activities. It will be disseminated to member cities, regional and local media and partner networks and will be updated on an annual basis. The production of factsheets will showcase urban policies and

facilitate the sharing of information. Country factsheets will be developed to disseminate findings across ECA thematic areas. Additional factsheets will be developed according to the activities of ECA work plan.

- **Activity 1.3:** Production of visibility materials such as infographics, videos, webinars, with media advisories and press releases on events, meetings, and other important news etc.

Following ECA work plan, visibility materials will be created for each event, meeting and webinar. All announcements or release of knowledge products regarding ECA will be accompanied by visibility materials. Media advisories and press releases will be developed following a template developed specifically for ECA, which follows the standards which will be established within ECA Communications Guidelines. Invitations, concept notes, meeting reports and meeting agendas will follow standardized templates and formatting requirements. All visibility materials will utilize ECA Identity Branding Guidelines (will be produced), which include logos, formatting suggestions and color schemes, and will follow ECA Visibility Guidelines to ensure ECA has a coherent image across the region and among all stakeholders.

Objective 2: Ensure the documenting of best practices and lessons learnt which will be synthesized and shared across countries. The key activities include:

- **Activity 2.1:** Mapping and documentation of best practices and lessons learned

Research on member and international cities participation in urban development are the first mapping activities contributing to ECA's repertoire of best practices and lessons learned. Best practices and lessons learned will be mined, as applicable, from each of the activities within the ECA work plan. Mapping will occur a minimum of one time annually, and data collection will be inclusive in nature. Questionnaires and focus groups will be employed to ensure all member cities and partners are able to provide inputs. Documentation will be generated via reports, presentations, infographics, fact sheets and policy briefs and uploaded to ECA Digital Platform.

- **Activity 2.2:** Sharing of best practices among cities to aid experiential learning

All documentation created will be added to ECA Digital Platform and disseminated via ECA listserv and other channels described in this Strategy. Key content will be shared via ECA printed materials. Social media posts and outreach to media outlets that highlight key messages and takeaways will drive users to access the documentation and will create further visibility. Sharing of best practices among cities will also occur via information and knowledge exchange moments, such as ECA meetings, workshops, capacity building trainings, events and other activities found within ECA work plan.

- **Activity 2.3:** Promoting the contextualization of best practices between member cities

Promoting the contextualization of best practices between member cities will build on the documentation and sharing practices of ECA. The contextualization component will be reinforced via the ECA's technical and capacity building activities, namely the creation of communities of practice, use of collaborative spaces on ECA Digital Platform, online discussion forums, webinars and other experiential learning moments within ECA work plan.

Activity 2.4: Ensure that the work on ECA in the region is well documented and publicized

Documentation and sharing will be publicized in member cities and to ECA's target audience via its newsletters, news articles, blog posts and other communications channels. Linkages with media outlets will promote ECA to local and global audiences, and national urban advocacy moments will be targeted to drive awareness and publicity toward ECA's outputs.

Objective 3: Support operations research, generation of new evidence/data across the region; as well as the dissemination of results from the baseline, mid-term and final project evaluations. The key activities include:

- **Activity 3.1:** Dissemination of project outcomes and findings

Meeting reports, presentations, annual reports, public-facing monitoring and evaluation reports and midterm reports that track ECA progress will all document project outcomes and findings

according to the timeline established in ECA Monitoring and Evaluation method. All documentation will be managed using ECA Google Drive (which will be created), which is integrated within the ECA Digital Platform. Once uploaded to the digital platform, documentation will be disseminated via the ECA listserv (electronic mailing list software applications), newsletters and social media as appropriate. Urban policy research findings, data and other products of ECA will be shared with users.

- **Activity 3.2:** Support the sharing and promotion of the uptake of knowledge through the development of knowledge management methods and tools

ECA will foster a culture of knowledge sharing, promotion and uptake. It will harness several knowledge management tools and methods including:

1. ECA Digital Platform which acts as a repository for all knowledge related to education policy.
2. ECA Google Drive will serve as its document manager so that all knowledge is carefully archived.
3. Cities-specific knowledge will be housed within ECA Digital Platform and tagged accordingly to constitute country profiles.
4. Analytics tools will allow ECA to track member cities and partners' usage of ECA Platform, meetings and social media, which will allow ECA to adapt its communications methods accordingly.
5. Data storage and analysis tools will capture knowledge and allow ECA to manage knowledge appropriately through evidence-driven decision making. Uptake of knowledge will be further reinforced via ECA's online forums, webinars, capacity building activities, trainings, online and in-person meetings and experiential exchange visits.

- **Activity 3.3:** Participate in the presentation of knowledge generated to various audiences

The Knowledge Management and Resource Mobilization and Networking and Communication Directorate will support the development of presentations, photos, videos and other media related to ECA to ensure that knowledge products are publicized and visible across the member cities and among relevant audiences, including via media outlets, social media platforms, webinars (online seminars conducted over the Internet) and urban advocacy moments related to ECA and its member cities. All activities within ECA work plan will be assessed by its Secretariat and knowledge presentation needs will be backstopped for each activity accordingly. A Powerpoint presentation template will be created.

Objective 4: Contribute to development and design of ECA communication and advocacy materials, such as presentations, articles, abstracts and posters. The key activities include:

- **Activity 4.1:** Development and design of communication and advocacy materials

The Networking and Communication Directorate will develop communication and advocacy materials for ECA target audience. Key materials will include ECA Powerpoint, ECA Information Brief, a Powerpoint template, meeting report template, an invitation template, presentation text introducing ECA, a press release template, social media templates and ECA Multimedia Bank (photos, videos and graphics).

- **Activity 4.2:** Validation of communication and visibility materials

The Networking and Communication Directorate will be responsible for quality control of all ECA communication and visibility materials. All ECA outputs must be approved by the Director General before publication. To aid in this process, a set of Visibility Guidelines will be drafted. The Networking and Communication Directorate will ensure the guidelines are applied to all public facing materials.

3. Advocacy Issues

ECA intends to conduct multiple advocacy activities to influence policies related to urban development with an intention of improving provision of best service delivery to Ethiopian people. The issues to be addressed in ECA advocacy strategy are:

1. To mention cities in Ethiopian Constitution

3.2 Advocacy Strategy Matrix of ECA

3.2.1 Summary of ECA Advocacy Strategy

3.2.1.1 Overall Goal of ECA Advocacy Work

To work together to influence policy processes that improve the lives of all Ethiopian cities dwellers through enhanced governance and accountable use of urban sector public resources, as well as the effective protection of human rights.

Advocacy Specific Goal Areas:

3.2.1.2 Overall Impact of ECA Advocacy Work

i. Government level:

ii. CSO level

a. The CSOs are pro-actively engaging in governance issues and demanding accountability

b. CSOs have enhanced capacity to effectively impact polices and governance processes.

iii. Community level:

a. The citizens are engaging and demanding accountability from their local governments.

b. The community is benefitting from progressively realizing their socio-economic rights through better resource utilization.

4. Conclusion

Ethiopian Cities Association (ECA) Communications and Advocacy Strategy leverages proven tools, channels and methods to ensure that its activity and responsibility is widely shared and disseminated across the country and on a global scale. This Strategy strives to be holistic and inclusive. It outlines roles and responsibilities for ECA's various member cities based on their strategic advantages and niche. Objectives and activities aim to create logical linkages, and channels, tools and materials are connected to operationalization procedures. To contribute to the ECA principle of inclusivity and to ensure that it is truly representative of Ethiopian cities and its vision for strengthened urban policy and implementation, this Strategy will undergo a validation process with all member cities and partners. ECA Secretariat will organize a validation workshop which will seek to validate content, agree on key messages and discuss the methods, roles and responsibilities and operationalization of the Strategy. The monitoring and evaluation procedures will further ECA's inclusive aims. Regular M&E reporting will uphold transparency regarding ECA's progress and achievements and through the acknowledgement and facilitation of constructive discussion around ECA's areas for improvement. ECA's adaptive management approach, which builds of data and evidence driven decision making, is devoted to maximizing the ECA's impact over the lifespan of the project and contributes to sustainable development.