

THE CAPACITY CRISIS IN AFRICA'S CITIES

African cities are engulfed by a severe capacity crisis that undermines all aspects of municipal functioning. Failure to address this will result in the failure of African cities.



28%

Cities are functioning at an average 28% of required staffing capacity

Larger cities are in a deeper crisis than smaller ones, with a disproportionate gap in staffing



80% to 45%

The overall staffing gap across countries ranges from 80% to 45%



Planning, Finance and Street Lighting have the most significant gaps



In terms of absolute numbers the main shortages are in Public Works, Finance and Revenue

Staffing structures are highly distorted with too few mid-level staff in relation to junior and senior staff



Overview

Cities and towns in sub-Saharan Africa are experiencing a crisis in capacity that is little recognised and poorly understood. The Future Cities Africa Programme has begun work to understand the depth and breadth of this crisis. It has analysed existing staff capacity in critical frontline services and key support functions in 16 cities of varying sizes across four countries.

The Capacity of a city is one of the most critical determinants of inclusive and resilient urban development. Cities across Africa are faced with mounting challenges of explosive levels of urbanisation, growing informalisation, and deteriorating services. These conditions have prevented cities from transforming into engines of inclusive growth.

While municipalities are responsible for addressing these challenges, they are often the weakest link in government. Understaffed by underqualified, poorly paid and under-motivated employees, it is no surprise that cities struggle to assume the multiple and increasingly complex roles expected of them. Future Cities Africa has examined the capacity trap that engulfs cities in Africa, undermining infrastructure provision and service delivery.

Initial research shows that cities are functioning at less than 30% of the capacity required to service their population, area, density, number of properties, revenue receipts and type of infrastructure networks. Figure 1 shows the staffing shortfall in absolute numbers by function for cities in each of the four countries.

In terms of absolute numbers, Ghana is the least staffed against the benchmark with a shortfall of 2,816, followed by Mozambique at 1,500, Uganda at 871, and Ethiopia at 676.

The staffing hierarchy across all cities represents a distortion, with excess of staff at the bottom of the pyramid and in some cases, overstaffing at the top - leaving too few mid-level staff to attend to the vast bulk of professional and technical work. In some cities, the pyramid is both inverted and highly inflated at the bottom end, which results in too many support staff with almost negligible supervision and monitoring.

FIGURE 1: STAFFING GAP

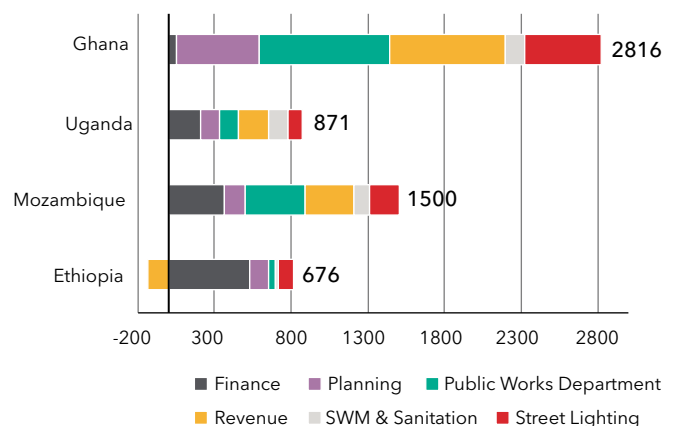


Figure 2 illustrates pay differentials for engineering staff across categories of employer in Ghana where local government are paid on the same scale as central civil service. It shows the most dramatic differences across all employer types at senior grades. While the differentials are less marked at middle and lower management levels, the differences are still significant.

FIGURE 2: PAY DIFFERENTIALS

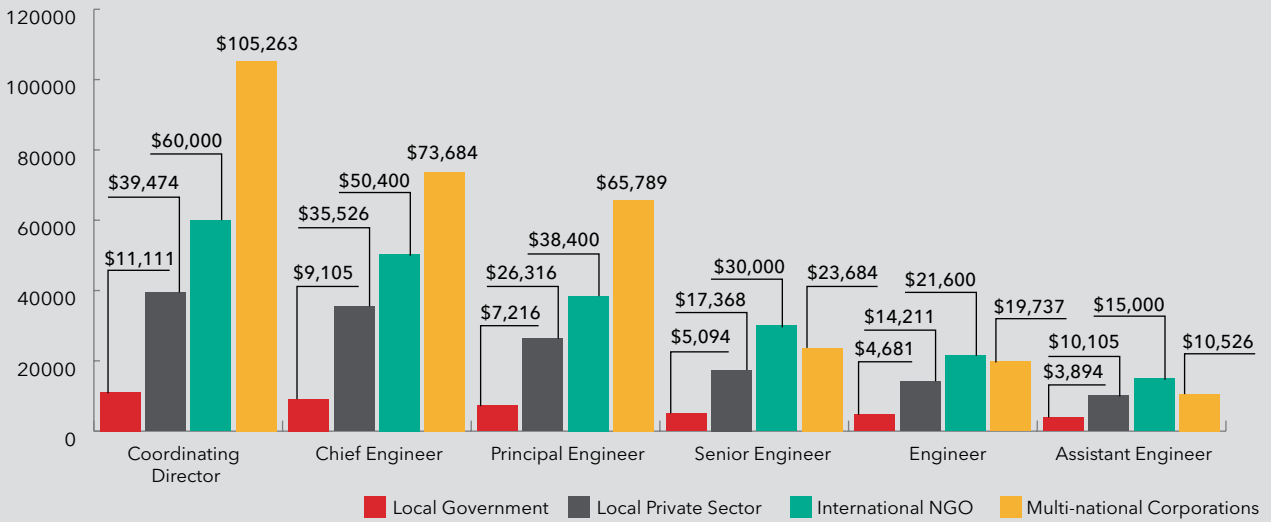
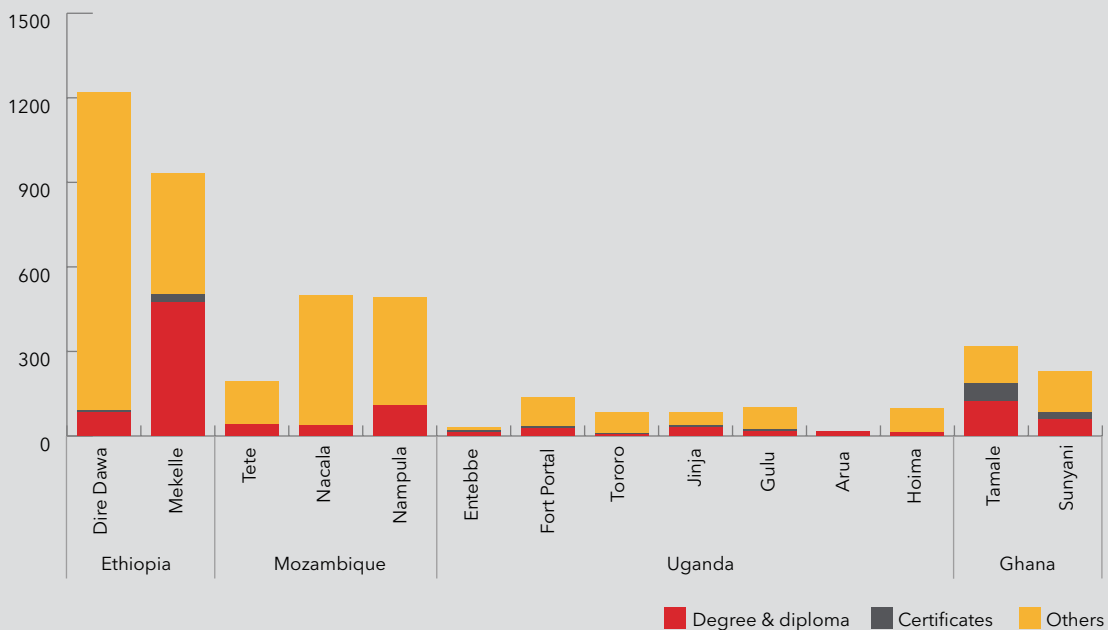


Figure 3 shows the capacity gap in terms of staff qualifications. Over two-thirds of staff have no post school educational qualifications. Only a quarter of staff have a degree or diploma level qualification and just 4% have certificates of attendance on training courses.

FIGURE 3: CAPACITY GAP



Conclusions

These findings clearly underscore why cities in developing countries struggle to provide barely functioning services. Cities are currently operating with just a fraction of the staff they need in managerial, technical and support roles. Of the staff they do have, more than two-thirds have no formal qualifications and all are consistently poorly paid compared to their counterparts at equivalent grades in the private sector.

This all adds up to a powerful, poisonous cocktail of inefficiency and neglect. The lack of human resource capacity is all the more worrisome in the light of many conventional prescriptions that advocate trimming, freezing and cutting of local government staff as a means to align establishment costs with consistent underfunding of capital and operational budgets.