AFRICA: BUILDING CITIES
(IMMERSIVE FIELD COURSE)

CONTEXT

Cities around the world are under increasing stress from two major forces. First, massive and rapid urbanization is underway as hundreds of millions of people move to cities seeking opportunity. Second, there are already shortages of basic resources like power, clean air, clean water, and affordable transit; and excesses of waste and traffic. Urbanization only makes these problems worse. On top of these two trends, many federal and local governments are unable to finance and build the basic infrastructure – roads, power grids, water, mass transit – that would address these issues. There is a lack of funding, or of consensus, or both. “IFC Africa: Building Cities” looks at the potential role of business and the private sector in financing and operating public infrastructure to achieve better outcomes.

IFC Africa: Building Cities is a Harvard Business School “Immersive Field Course” (IFC). This is an elective in the second year of the Harvard MBA curriculum. 40 MBA students will be traveling to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania to investigate where there will be opportunities for the private finance of public infrastructure. Prof. John Macomber, Senior Lecturer in Finance, is course head. A related classroom course at HBS is “Building Sustainable Cities and Infrastructure.”

OBJECTIVES

There are three major objectives of the work. These are 1) to increase the awareness of HBS students with respect to emerging Africa and the opportunities for economic and social development; 2) to research and publish teaching material that will be influential at HBS and other schools; 3) to publish material that will help investors, entrepreneurs, and corporates to select optimum sectors and opportunities for investment in Africa. This builds on the work of prior Building Cities immersive field courses.

CALENDAR

September – December 2017: Course work at Harvard regarding nations, cities, sectors, and public private partnerships
January 7th – January 11th 2018, Addis Ababa: Students work in eight teams of 4-6 people conducting numerous interviews, site visits, phone calls, and analyses to address the research question. (Students design their own schedules).
January 12th, Addis Ababa: Student teams report their findings to a panel of local experts, who provide feedback
January 13th- 18th, Dar es Salaam: Students work in eight teams of 4-6 people conducting numerous interviews, site visits, phone calls, and analyses to address the research question. (Students teams design their own meeting schedules).
January 19th, Dar es Salaam: Student teams report their findings to a panel of local experts, who provide feedback
February, 2018: Students summarize their findings at HBS
June, 2018: Publication of HBS case studies, white papers, journal and magazine articles

CONTENT EXPERTS AND STUDENT TEAMS

Each student team will be matched with one “content expert” person or organization in each city. The role of the content experts has three parts: a) Help the students to refine their approach to answering the research question; b) suggest other resources or organizations to interview; c) suggest effective ways to shape the reporting of findings. The content experts can do this by phone, by email, or in person in country. A handful of meetings and calls is the extent of the expectation.

SECTORS

The research question for all teams to address is: “What are the most promising ideas to attract effective private investment and operations in this sector to this city in the next decade?”

1. Power Generation and Transmission: Hydrocarbons
2. Power Generation and Transmission: Renewables
3. Urban Transport: Buses, BRT, LRT, Mobility on Demand
4. Intercity Transport: Toll Roads, Rail, Ports, Logistics
5. Water/Sanitation and Agricultural Innovation
6. Municipal Solid Waste / Waste to Energy
7. Telecomms and Infotech
8. Commercial Real Estate