Aide Memoire
Urban Governance and Access to Services in Asian Cities

Bangkok, 28 – 29 September 2015

Project Description

Urban population in Asia has been growing rapidly over the past 50 years, a trend which is estimated to continue unabated. Cities contribute to economic, social and technological transformation by providing opportunities for economies of scale, products, income, services and social experimentation. They play a vital role in productivity gains through innovation, trade, globalization of capital and the growth of service industries. However, urbanization has led to an increasing incidence of urban poverty and inequity, deteriorating quality of the urban environment and deficiencies in access to basic urban services, including water supply and sanitation, low income housing, waste management, energy, transport and health.

Achieving results in sustainable human development in urban areas requires a multi-sectoral and cross-thematic approach. For example, interventions to alleviate urban poverty include the capacity development of urban institutions, sustainable livelihoods programs, horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms among government agencies at the city and national levels, engagement of civil society and land use planning and management systems. Ad hoc and isolated interventions in specific sectors and even thematic areas are necessary but not sufficient to show visible results. Urban programs need to be sustained over longer periods of time to improve the quality of life of citizens.

Urban governance matters in promoting sustainable human development for several reasons. Traditional over-reliance on technocratic approaches and resource constraints have led to urban exclusion and urbanization of poverty which requires new urban policies, and governance and civil service capacities. Focus on economic growth and industrialization has created space and inclination for much needed participatory structures and reorientation to engage all stakeholders. The need is to achieve results in urban settings for citizens and to cope with alarming gaps between plans and their implementation.

There are a number of challenges and opportunities in urban Asia (The State of Asian Cities: ESCAP 2010/11). First, the "business" of government in Asian cities has shifted to that of the "process" of governance with the engagement of civil society organizations and the private sector. Second, urban governance has been a key feature of urban policy agenda in the region for over two decades, which has been influenced by the global economic crisis. Third, policy statements about urban decentralization encompass comprehensive objectives, but in practice are far less comprehensive because they do not blend political devolution and power-sharing with financial and administrative capacity of local governments and local administration as catalysts for urban development. Many cities are heavily dependent on tax revenue allocations, grants-in-aid and other forms of financial assistance from central and provincial/state governments. Fourth, the quality of the urban environment is deteriorating. Finally, urban Asia is facing a number of peri-urban governance challenges, including those related to jurisdictions of peri-urban areas, ecological footprints of cities that spill-over into the peripheries, mechanisms for

citizen engagement in service delivery, multi-agency consultation mechanisms and tools for local level accountability.

The most critical challenge facing cities in Asia, however, is inadequate access of citizens to shelter and basic urban services including water supply and sanitation, education and health. Effective delivery of urban services and their access to all segments of society in Asia is constrained by a set of urban governance challenges: inadequate political and fiscal decentralization to cities and towns, lack of coordination among the functionally oriented government departments and urban local governments, conflicting structures and mechanisms for service delivery, weak capacity of local governments; and jurisdictions of peri-urban areas and their engagements in urban planning and management.

Objectives

The workshop on Urban Governance and Access to Services in Asian Cities aims to examine urban governance challenges and opportunities and collaboratively design a multi-year regional program to strengthen capacities of relevant government entities, CSOs and training and research institutions through country studies, regional level dialogue and trend analysis, and country-anchored city consultations. Specifically, the workshop aims to:
- Identify critical deficits in service provision including in water and sanitation, health, education and in responses to natural disasters;
- Discuss national policies, programs. challenges and opportunities to improve access of citizens to the above services and promote sustainable urban development;
- Examine urban governance capacity including the quality of the civil service, capacity of local governments, control of corruption, and mechanisms for horizontal and vertical coordination, transparency and citizen participation; and
- Prepare a multi-year regional program on Urban Governance for Sustainable Development through a consortium of research and training institutions in the region.

Workshop Modalities and Outcomes

Representatives of research and training institutions from Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines and Thailand will be invited to participate in the workshop along with resource persons. United Nations Development Programme, UN-HABITAT and Cities Alliance will be represented as international development partners. The outcome of the workshop will be an outline of the multi-year regional program on Urban Governance for Sustainable Development. A consortium of national institutions will be established to collaboratively design and implement the program. The first phase of the program could focus on access to urban services or another topic related to sustainable urban development. East-West Center will provide technical guidance and support, mobilize resources for program implementation and undertake dissemination activities in the region and globally. We will forge partnerships with other regional and national institutions to contribute to change in cities and towns through national and regional level analysis and dialogue, preparation of policy briefs on emerging issues and exchange of innovations and good practices. The institutions invited for the workshop are the following:

- Dhaka University, **Bangladesh**
- Department of Urban Planning at Tongji University, **China**
- National Institute of Urban Affairs, **India**
- Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Bandung Institute of Technology, **Indonesia**
- The Urban Unit, Lahore, **Pakistan**
- Jesse Robredo Institute of Governance, De La Salle University, **Philippines**
- Social Research Institute. Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, **Thailand**
- School of Built Environment, Dept of Urban & Regional Planning, Curtin University, **Australia**
- Mirvac School of Sustainable Development, Bond University, **Australia**
- East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, **USA**

Governance and Service Delivery Nexus

There is a close relationship between effective governance and the ability of governments and civil society and the private sector to deliver services to citizens. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the World Development Report (WDR), and the Post-2015 Development Agenda provide main frameworks for service delivery and access in the context of sustainable human development. Each of these frameworks recognizes the centrality of governance to move from the articulation of government policy statements to achieving results for the people by implementing specific programs and projects.

There are several issues in effective provision of basic <u>education services</u> in developing countries. (WDR 2004). Access to education services is unaffordable especially by the poor. Some schools are dysfunctional with absentee teachers and grossly inadequate infrastructure. Technical quality of education can be low because of weak capability of teachers, their low motivation, and a lack of complementary inputs. Client responsiveness can be low when communities including parents and other stakeholders are not sufficiently engaged in supporting, or overseeing a school. Some schools have low learning achievements vis-à-vis the amount of resources spent. Often inadequate resources are allocated to achieve stated objectives. The result is that the poor and low income groups often have less access to, and low quality of, education services. Coping with these issues requires governance capacity at the national and local levels. There are several aspects of governance that affect the delivery of education services - including the ability of citizens to hold the state including policymakers and civil servants accountable for their performance, the clarity and consistency of national objectives, policy frameworks and programs communicated by the Ministry of Education and related government entities to stakeholders, and the capacity of "frontline providers" including teachers and administrators to provide high quality education at low cost.

The delivery system for <u>health services</u> is composed of many actors, and can be depicted in terms of inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes. In some cases, health services are failing the majority of the population. Although facilities have been provided (clinics, hospitals), the quality of service provided is often very poor because of a lack of skilled manpower, drugs, supervision, and funding. Health outcomes are the worst among the disadvantaged groups because they have less voice in decisions over the allocation of funds for health services The key governance

dimensions that affect health service delivery are how a government is organized (decentralized/centralized) to bring services closer to people, its capacity for strong collaboration with all stakeholders including the private sector and civil society, and its willingness to engage in the co-production of services with the private sector.

Access to water and sanitation is the most basic concern in urban areas, and in households that are threatened by disease from untreated water, health challenges resulting from poor sanitation and rotting garbage, and high costs of energy. Often, the biggest challenges to water and sanitation service delivery are lack of capital investment to build and expand the water networks, lack of operation and maintenance capacities, and poor organization, particularly at local authority levels. The partnership between central and local governments has been central to shaping delivery mechanisms. In rapidly expanding urban areas, both informal sector and private sector initiatives have been central in addressing the sanitation challenges. As the urban, informal settlements continue to grow, it is imperative to strengthen the regulatory frameworks, improve regularization of property rights, and encourage both community and local government investments in sanitation. In view of the above, the urban governments need capacity to spend in accordance with national priorities, coordinate across sectors, manage decentralization to bring services closer to people, and develop and deploy administrative and technical capacity to ensure implementation. They also need to ensure mechanisms for the participation of communities, accountability of public officials responsible for water and sanitation and controlling corruption.

Over the past decade many people in the Asian cities have been directly and indirectly affected by natural disasters. Disasters follow from the interaction between potentially damaging physical events, such as flooding and tsunamis, with the individual and societal lack of awareness and preparedness, which often result from poor governance. Natural disasters are, therefore and necessarily, also human disasters. The governance dimensions of disaster response include the development of an integrated national policy framework and effective mechanisms to coordinate disaster response; decentralization of functions and resources to local units of government; political, financial and administrative accountability; adoption of codes, strengthening oversight institutions and monitoring; transparency, clarity of procedures, and access to information; and building community resilience through participation of individuals and groups at the local and community levels in policymaking and program implementation.

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