



INTEGRATING URBANIZATION INTO THE CCA AND UNDAF A GUIDE FOR UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAMS



UNDG ASIA-PACIFIC PAPER ON URBANIZATION
INTEGRATING URBANIZATION INTO THE CCA AND UNDAF:

A Guide for United Nations Country Teams

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‘Our struggle for global sustainability will be won or lost in cities’.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 2012¹

This document has been developed under the aegis of the United Nations Development Group Asia-Pacific (UNDG A-P) with the collaboration of 14 United Nations agencies. It aims to guide United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) across the Asia-Pacific in the design and delivery of urban programmes that are effective, integrated and multi-sectoral. Spanning five main UNDAF pillars – governance; poverty reduction and employment; basic services; food, agriculture and rural-urban linkages; and environment, climate change and Disaster risk reduction (DRR) - it includes:

- **Part I: An overview** of the major trends and drivers of urbanization, highlighting the opportunities and challenges in cities, towns and peri-urban settlements across the Asia-Pacific.
- **Part II: A practical framework** of strategies, entry points and sample indicators to support the implementation of effective and targeted urban programmes, working in partnership with other sectors and in alignment with local needs.
- **Annexes: A selection of additional tools and materials**, with key questions, guidance notes, selected reading and a selection of some urban strategies from development partners working in the region.

This document, while not intended as an exhaustive or prescriptive “to do” list, outlines some of the practical tools and options for different agencies to maximize the potential of urbanization for inclusive and sustainable human development. Depending on priorities and local context, country teams across the region can decide on which key objectives and the optimal strategic steps to achieving them through joint programming.

¹ [Remarks](#) to the High-level Delegation of Mayors and Regional Authorities, New York, April 23, 2012.

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Background to the Guidance Note

Urbanization has emerged as one of the key issues of the twenty first century. From the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 (also known as Rio+20) to the High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, there is an increasing international consensus that “cities are where the battle for sustainable development will be won or lost”.² The challenges and opportunities are especially acute in developing countries, in particular in Asia and the Pacific³.

This guidance paper and framework has been developed for the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Asia and the Pacific in response to the growing importance of urbanization to human development and poverty reduction in the region. It provides an overview of the issues affecting cities and towns, and the tools available to address them, to guide country teams in the delivery of more equitable and rights-based urban programmes.

In particular, this document aims to highlight the considerable potential of urbanization to bring together different sectors in collaborative partnerships, both among United Nations agencies and with other actors, including civil society organizations (CSOs), private sector organizations and local community groups. By synergizing the knowledge and capacity of these stakeholders, it should be possible to achieve

sustainable urbanization as a driver for sustainable development.

Process: The process of developing this paper was initiated based on the decision made at the UNDG A-P Regional Directors Meeting held in Delhi in March 2012. It was agreed that a regional time-bound Task Team would be established, led by UN-Habitat, with the objective of developing a regional paper on urbanization, ahead of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in 2016.

A total of 14 agencies contributed to the Task Team. With UN-Habitat leading and ESCAP and FAO co-leading, UNDP, UNEP and UNICEF were working group members. ILO, OHCHR, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNOPS, UN Women, WFP and WHO contributed as members. The Task Team met and collaborated throughout 2012 and 2013 to discuss and develop the paper, including finalization of the current version. This report is delivered against outputs stipulated for UNDG A-P Work Plans, i.e. Work Plan 2012 Output 1.1, Work Plan 2013, Output 2.2. It is envisaged that UNDAF rollout country teams will provide feedback on the document when developing the next cycle of UNDAFs.

Structure: Using the UNDAF framework as a template, this guidance note highlights key issues affecting urban areas and outlines entry points for programmes to respond to these challenges. In line with previous UNDAF documents, it is structured around the following five pillars:

Governance: the capacity of urban areas to deliver inclusive urban policies and land management at a national, regional and municipal level, protecting and empowering all residents, including women, children, youth, migrants and persons with disabilities.

² United Nations (2013), [A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development](#), p.17. The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

³ This document is referring to the [UNDG definition of Asia and the Pacific](#). However, when referencing other sources, data reflect the particular definitions of the organization in question.

Poverty Reduction and Employment: the human challenges of rapid economic growth in cities with uneven human development benefits, the formal and informal labour market and the distinctive aspects of urban poverty, in particular living costs, insecure tenure and other rights gaps.

Basic Services: the availability of safe and affordable health care including HIV/AIDS prevention and support, education, clean water, sanitation and other services to the urban population, including access issues for women, children, migrants and slum dwellers.

Food and Nutrition Security, Agriculture and Rural-Urban Linkages: urban nutrition and the web of urban-rural connections, from food systems to migration, connecting cities and rural areas.

Environment, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR): vulnerability to natural disasters such as flooding, earthquake, volcano and tsunami, the effects of climate change, the degradation of ecosystem services resulting from unplanned urban expansion and the challenges of waste disposal, sanitation and pollution.

Part 1 examines the trends driving urbanization in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as the key challenges facing the region, in order to present an overview of the complex forces reshaping cities and how governments, agencies, CSOs and communities can seize the opportunity and maximize the potential of urbanization to achieve sustainable development. Building on this analysis, **Part 2** provides a framework with more detailed suggestions on entry points, resources and indicators to guide urban programming across different fields, as well as sample country UNDAFs with urban components from within the region.

The **Annex** contains further materials on urban data collection, cross-sectoral linkages and additional readings. Together, this guidance note aims to provide UN County Teams, development partners, practitioners and policy makers with an overview of the major issues and opportunities pertaining to urbanization to inform future programming in the region. While neither exhaustive nor prescriptive, it aims to outline the range of available options and some examples of good practice for UNCTs to consider and potentially adapt to their own work, as appropriate to their particular national and local context.

Box 1: The Potential of Urban Partnerships

In addition to formal institutions, urban areas host a variety of stakeholders, from community groups and CSOs to local businesses and corporations that require a fundamentally new approach to partnerships. Though this diversity can prove challenging for traditional models of urban governance, resulting in local tensions or exclusion, the potential for transformative and inclusive collaboration amongst different stakeholders is substantial. Many Asia-Pacific cities have successfully leveraged multi-stakeholder partnerships to pilot and implement rights-based frameworks. These include Pasay City's Child Welfare Council, Port Moresby's UN-partnered Safer City for Women programme and the 100 'accessible cities' in China's Twelfth Five Year Work Programme on Disability. These programmes, in addition to demonstrating the potential for urban areas to pilot progressive approaches to governance, have also drawn strength from the effective sharing of knowledge and capacity between different United Nations agencies and local authorities, as well as non-governmental stakeholders such as academics and CSOs. More information on multi-stakeholder partnerships, illustrated by a case study of the Child Friendly Movement in the Philippines, is provided in Annex 3.

Overview: Asia and the Pacific in an Urban Century

Urbanization is transforming the world and will shape this century's development experience - and this change is especially dramatic in the Asia-Pacific, where nearly half of the world's urban population reside⁴. In the process, it is redefining the region in a variety of ways:

- **Economically:** Accounting for more than 80% of the region's GDP, cities are where much of the region's productivity and employment opportunities are concentrated due to their scale and diversification.
- **Socially:** Urban areas are redefining popular norms, bringing diversity and tolerance but also new tensions and conflicts. As a result, cities can serve as social models but also create conflict between different groups.
- **Politically:** From civil activism to globalization, cities are on the frontline of political change. This is why urban areas can be associated with both progressive movements and instability.
- **Environmentally:** Cities can provide a range of positive environmental benefits, if well managed, but are also responsible for the region's increasing unsustainable consumption and production and environmental degradation. Rapid unplanned expansion increased urban risks and vulnerability, compounded by climate changes.

These factors necessitate a major shift in strategy from governments, development partners, CSOs and other stakeholders if the

potential benefits of urbanization for sustainable development and poverty reduction are to be realized. This paper provides an overview and analysis of the challenges the region faces as it moves towards a projected urban majority by 2030. Furthermore, it outlines key entry points and focus areas for actors to mainstream urbanization issues into programming and partnerships.

Development interventions in the region, whether by national governments or international agencies, have historically focused on rural areas. This approach made sense when the large majority of the population, not to mention the most extreme forms of poverty, were concentrated in the countryside and the primary source of livelihood was from the agricultural sector. However, with the growing interconnections between rural and urban areas, together with the emergence of new patterns of urban poverty and inequality within cities and unsustainable urbanization, national development strategies must be adjusted to reflect these changing realities. These strategies must take into account migration with large numbers of rural poor now relocating temporarily or on a permanent basis, to urban centres – and with them the need for development assistance.

Why then is there a need to reorient this practice? There are many reasons for a greater emphasis on urban issues, but none implies that poverty and underdevelopment in rural areas are now secondary or unrelated concerns. In fact, a central argument for a stronger emphasis on urban issues is that their interests are increasingly more intertwined than ever before, particularly as urban areas play a determining role in economic performance at a national level. Better management of urban areas, through

⁴ Asian Development Bank (2012), [Green Urbanization in Asia: Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific 2012](#), p.xxvii.

greater integration, benefits rural development too.

Furthermore, **poverty is increasingly urbanizing**, characterized by high living costs, limited services and social marginalization. While overall poverty has reduced in most countries across the region, especially in rural areas, the absolute number of urban poor has increased. Trends vary from country to country. The lack of comparable and updated data makes it difficult to develop a precise assessment, however, in many developing cities the challenges of urban poverty and the growth of slums remain.

Critically, the generally positive picture of urban development conceals the growth of inequality within and between cities, including the many people - from women, children and youth to migrants, slum dwellers and persons with disabilities - who are denied these benefits. Tacking the rights of these disadvantaged groups, particularly the political exclusion that reinforces monetary poverty in urban areas, is, therefore, essential. Nevertheless, well-managed and inclusive cities offer urban and rural residents alike the most effective routes out of poverty.

Rural and urban areas are also becoming more interdependent. With the development of transport and communications, cities are now affecting the even remote communities. The effects of rapid urbanization can be both

have long suffered neglect, but for all its challenges this growth - a natural stage in every country's development - should not be resisted as a solely negative phenomenon. Instead, countries must leverage the benefits of urbanization and mitigate potentially adverse outcomes through sound strategies that ensure the wellbeing of their populations while protecting local resources and farmland.

Urbanization presents many opportunities to accelerate human development across the region. In China and other East Asia countries, for example, urbanization has been associated with significant poverty reduction and economic growth in both cities and rural areas. Furthermore, to manage urbanization processes effectively, local capacity in the area of urban planning, management and governance will need to be rapidly enhanced. This is an area where the United Nations and other development agencies can offer important support through their country and regional programmes.

Urban areas, due to their scale and size, have particular potential for effective, cost efficient and multi-sectoral poverty reduction. Collaborations between different United Nations agencies in urban contexts, such as the "ONE UN programme" in Hoi An, Vietnam, as well as city-to-city exchanges, regional and global city associations such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), CITYNET and Cities Alliance, demonstrate the

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