



Yangzhou Recommendations on Sustainable Cities and Urbanization

Outcome, 18 December 2013

Participants met in Yangzhou, China, from 16 to 18 December 2013, to deliberate on the challenges and opportunities for promoting sustainable cities and sustainable urbanization.

The critical role of cities and urban areas as drivers of growth and prosperity is indisputable; no country can develop without industrialization and urbanization. At the same time, many countries, in particular developing countries, face significant challenges in planning and managing sustainable cities and urbanization processes. If unmet, they will leave development opportunities lost for many generations to come.

The ongoing work on Sustainable Development Goals and post-2015 processes is critical in defining the priorities for the global development agenda, including sustainable cities and urbanization.

Good principles of sustainable urbanization include, but are not limited to the following:

- Applying a holistic approach to sustainable city development and urbanization with a longer-term vision and integrated planning perspective;
- Taking into account rural dynamics and rural development needs within the holistic planning approach;
- Engaging all relevant stakeholders in the planning and managing of sustainable cities and urbanization processes.

- Encouraging networking among local governments and city administrators to share ideas and good practices in the planning and managing of sustainable cities and sustainable urbanization.
- Developing public transport systems and reducing dependency on private motor vehicle use;
- Fostering growth in the service sector;
- Encouraging sound waste management practices;
- Developing environmental capacities and controls on emissions to improve, among other issues, resilience to natural disasters;
- Managing urban expansion and reducing settlements in risk prone areas;
- Promoting efficient water resource management;
- Providing decent job opportunities, including for rural and migrant workers and integrating them in urban planning.

Financing, good governance and effective partnerships are essential requirements for successful application of these principles and should get further attention moving forward.

Urban Planning and Slum Upgrading

- Slum upgrading entails more than just the provision of housing. It is a broader approach that needs to consider basic services, economic development, safety, resilience and cultural aspects.
- Long-term planning is required to ensure the sustainability of slum upgrading projects including the components of planning, design, financing, implementation and maintenance.
- Balance in the urban renewal of historic centers and the protection of vulnerable and ecologically sensitive areas with the planning for new city extensions is needed. In this process, avoid measures that encourage an unbalanced shift toward higher-income residents in existing areas at the expense of low-income households by adopting inclusive place-based policies in support of low-income housing.
- Local governments should harness the wisdom of the communities and civil society organization to facilitate the implementation of slum upgrading and urban revitalization programmes.
- Urban development investment should be based on more objective and scientific criteria, with decisions based on careful assessment of long-term costs and benefits.
- Local governments should lead and guide urban development resource mobilization in close consultation with private sector actors, ensuring the availability of sufficient public space for infrastructure and social services, and reserving space for future development.
- Prosperity and sustainable urban development can only be achieved by prioritizing community involvement, clear legal frameworks, effective urban planning systems and sound urban governance structures.

Green Infrastructure and Urban Transport

- Investment in public transport infrastructure and services remains key to sustainable urban development. Additional transport sector investment and related public and private financing is urgently needed, in particular in developing countries and their cities.
- The construction of new commercial centers at major new bus and railway stations can offer new sources of revenues to co-finance public investment in transport infrastructure.
- Sustainable transport policies and their implementation will need to explore opportunities to generate greater public revenues from owners and operators of private motor vehicles with a view to incentivizing and/or to supporting the provision of public transport services.
- Education in urban transport can increase people's awareness of their rights and duties in urban areas, hereby contributing to improve road traffic safety.
- Park & ride systems, inner-city congestion charges and other measures can offer significant options to alleviate traffic congestion.
- Public-private partnerships can play an important role in the provision of affordable public transport services.
- Accessible, affordable and safe transport options for the poor can enhance livelihood opportunities and facilitate greater social interaction in cities.
- A more effective urban and multi-modal transport development and planning requires greater inter-institutional coordination and cooperation.
- Greater investment in sidewalks and pedestrian-only lanes, as well as bike lanes, can greatly improve non-motorized mobility, reduce the risks or accidents, and improve road safety.
- Planning for sustainable transport will need to be based on comprehensive needs assessments of the various social groups, including women, the elderly, children and people with disabilities.

The Urban Built Environment

- As cities account for 60-80% of energy consumption and 75% of carbon emission, clean and renewable energy should be integrated with planning for the city's built environment in the transformation towards sustainable cities.
- Planning the sustainable built environment should take a "Smart City" approach, addressing urban clean energy, smart grid, green buildings, smart multimodal mobility and good governance, among other issues, in an integrated and holistic manner.
- Sustainable cities and neighborhoods should be inclusive, connected and environmentally friendly, engaging all stakeholders in the planning and decision-making process.
- Preservation of natural systems and provision of green spaces as well as public space are important elements of sustainable cities and neighborhoods.

- Rehabilitation and redevelopment of old structures offer alternatives for building new structures, saving material inputs and waste generation.
- Investments in green buildings and utilizing green building materials can contribute to a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, improve resource efficiency and create a healthier living environment. Efforts can also be made at household level by addressing such issues as insulation, shading, windows and solar panels, among others.
- Effective local institutional authority is essential for urban renewal projects. Public-private partnerships as well as innovative financing, such as property tax incremental financing, offer a potential financing mechanism.

Meeting the Service Challenges

- Meeting the challenge of providing effective and affordable services for all in ways that support and further sustainable and inclusive urban development is a key challenge for the cities of today and the future.
- Looking beyond sectoral approaches can help accrue greater benefits and impacts through multi-sectoral and holistic planning and action.
- There is an urgent need for more integrated planning and management, and a need to broaden partnerships for successful service delivery, especially in meeting the needs of the poorest and those living in under- and un-serviced urban and peri-urban communities.
- There are welcome trends in this regard (waste management, health, planning for resilient cities etc); in ‘closing the loop’ to seek solutions beyond sectoral approaches and looking for co-benefits through innovative solutions based on integrated approaches and a shared understanding of the problem and possible solutions across multiple stakeholders.
- This requires overcoming several challenges, including developing greater consensus on the nature of the challenges and ensuring coherence across actors in meeting needs; more effective and open communication and information sharing engaging all stakeholders; meeting the need for innovation and leadership, which involves risk-taking and going beyond ‘business as usual approaches’; and a commitment to implementation, together with a willingness and capacity to engage with stakeholders– including poorer and marginalized populations.
- Meeting service gaps also has spatial dimensions in which service needs should define the ‘region’, rather than existing administrative boundaries.
- Though there are complexities involved, working across not only sectoral but also administrative and political boundaries through innovation and responsive institutional arrangements and mechanisms is a critical governance transformation required to meet the service needs of growing urban populations.

Dynamic Cities for Balanced, Inclusive and Sustainable Growth

- Rapid population growth, unsustainable consumption and production, economic transformation and growing middle class are the three mega trends of cities and urbanization in many parts of the world.
- These challenges should be addressed holistically, applying essential transformations, including changing the way we design cities, so that investment in people becomes the next driver of growth. In addition, the way cities are governed should be considered.
- Shift is needed from short-term exploitation of natural and human capitals to long-term investments in them.
- Policies should ensure that the focus is on people, supported by introducing circular smart ideas and smart technologies.
- New concepts of resource-sharing, demand side management and customer involvement need to be integrated in urban planning and land development.
- Collaborative governance should be strengthened, and effective stakeholder engagement further recommended.
- Standards and measures can be helpful in providing a reliable reference for assessments and certification purposes, as well as guiding policy choices and implementation.
- In some countries it has been useful to curb city expansion by keeping municipal functions within walking distance, ensuring the focus on people and the mixed usage of land, and introducing smart technologies.
- Public-private partnerships can play an important role in building sustainable cities.
- Policy responses must consider impacts beyond urban boundaries and across sector silos, including rural development needs.
- Integrating ecological and low-carbon city development with the green economy and with culture will help make cities more dynamic and contribute to sustainable economic growth.

Rural-Urban linkages in Sustainable Cities Development

- Planners need to consider urban-rural issues holistically (economic, demographic, environmental, special linkages) and promote opportunities in all these areas.
- Measures need to target the different income segments of the population providing low cost housing opportunities; targeted loans for low income households and affordable rental options.
- Urban planning needs to be flexible and adaptable to the long-term needs of the city, incorporating concern for peoples of different cultures and religions.
- Rapid development of peri-urban areas (urban sprawl) has increased the need for public service delivery, requiring redistribution of resources.

- Enhancing regional connectivity, including transport and roads is essential for effective urban-rural development. Likewise, economic connectivity needs to improve to facilitate competitiveness and access to markets.
- Local governments must be engaged actively in solving urbanization challenges, encouraging a focus on development potentials of their communities rather than short term political gains.
- The agricultural sector and local industries should be engaged in the planning processes of rural communities to promote local economic activity and income opportunities.
- A network of local authorities to strengthen shared learning and exchange of information was found to be useful moving forward.