

**Fourth Regional Workshop on  
Integrated Resource Management in Asian Cities: The Urban Nexus  
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 5-7 November, 2014**

**WORKSHOP SUMMARY**

The Fourth Regional Workshop on “Integrated Resource Management in Asian cities: the Urban Nexus”, took place from 5 to 7 November, 2014 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and was organised by ESCAP in partnership with GIZ, the Municipality of Ulaanbaatar and ICLEI. The workshop was organized in the context of the project “Integrated Resource Management in Asian Cities: The Urban Nexus “(thereafter called “Urban Nexus Project”), financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by GIZ in partnership with ESCAP, ICLEI and the Nexus partner cities.

The workshop was attended by more than 130 participants from China, Indonesia, Mongolia, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Participants included representatives from the city governments of the partner cities, including four mayors and one vice-mayor, representatives from national ministries of participating countries, private sector enterprises, academic experts, and representatives of international financial institutions and international organizations. Vice-Mayors from 15 different cities of Mongolia also participated along with a number of other representatives from the national Ministries of Mongolia.

H.E. Sanjaasuren Oyun, Minister of Environment and Green Development, H.E. Gerhard Tiedemann, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Mongolia, H.E. Gochoosuren Baigalmaa, Vice Minister, Ministry of Road, Transport, Construction and Urban Development, Mr. Sorogjoo Ochirbat, Vice-Mayor of Ulaanbaatar in charge of Urban Development and Investment, and Mr. Donovan Storey, Chief, Sustainable Urban Development Section, ESCAP delivered opening remarks.

It was emphasized that the nexus between energy, water and food security is a critical issue for countries in the region, as the demand for these resources is rapidly increasing in light of population growth and changing consumption patterns. This project, therefore, address a critical need and challenge for the region, namely, how to efficiently and equitably manage the urban transformation taking place in the region in balance with those natural resources which both underpin the region’s economic growth and its people’s well-being. Enhanced cooperation between national and local governments was highlighted as a critical step in addressing this challenge.

It was noted that countries in the region are experiencing rapid urbanization, not only in major urban centres but also in secondary cities. This presents a challenge to local governments, but also an opportunity, as the required infrastructure has not been built yet. Integrating the nexus thinking into current and future investments

would allow putting cities on a more sustainable path, while retrofitting later would be very costly. Therefore, it is critical to understand and consider both the quantitative and qualitative (liveability, quality of life) dimensions and opportunities of the nexus. However, incremental change is not sufficient any more, considering dwindling water, energy and food resources. We need transformation.

The workshop allowed reviewing and learning from the experience of Mongolia, and in particular of the city of Ulaanbaatar, in promoting urban nexus initiatives. Mongolia has recently adopted in June 2014 its Green Development Strategy, a milestone in its efforts to promote a developmental shift from brown to green growth. The Strategy has a number of concrete objectives and targets to increase the share of renewable energy resources, decrease building heat loss, increase the percentage of protected areas, increase investment in environmental restoration and promote.

It was noted that the per capita energy consumption in Mongolia is higher than the world average, mainly due to high demand for heating during the harsh winter months. At the same time, a large percentage of the population lives in ger areas, as much as 60% in the case of Ulaanbaatar, without access to clean energy, water and proper sanitation. To respond to these challenges the city of Ulaanbaatar, has introduced a wide range of projects to promote the retrofitting of buildings as well as the promotion of independent energy and water access and redevelopment of ger areas.

The workshop allowed reviewing the concept of green buildings and its critical relevance in the promotion of urban nexus and for the development of smart cities. It was noted that while technical solutions exist, the construction industry has not changed much in the past century and would need to accelerate innovation to meet changing needs. Discussions emphasized the need to look at green buildings from a life-cycle perspective, from design to decommissioning and to pay special attention to the operations stage, where currently the bulk of energy consumption and associated greenhouse gas emissions takes place. It was noted that behaviours have a critical impact on the effectiveness of technical solutions.

Drawing from lessons learned in the promotion of green buildings and integrated water resource management; the workshop emphasized the key role of economic and fiscal incentives and called for a review of energy and water tariffs. These should be set high enough to guarantee the business case for nexus solutions and for behavioural change, while at the same time ensuring affordability, especially for low income groups. The workshop also highlighted the important role of regulation, including building codes, and standardization in the promotion of urban nexus and smart cities.

All cities have different settings, including in terms of climate, environment, and socio-economic context. Therefore, it is imperative that technical solutions be tailored to local circumstances and to recognize an appropriate level of technology which is fit for purpose and solves the problem, cognizant of capacity, complimentary systems and scale.

Similarly, there are very different governance and institutional contexts to work from and through. This applies at the local level, and between local and other spheres of government. At the same time, the workshop noted a general institutional fragmentation and disconnect of competencies and financing between national and local governments. In this regard, the workshop called for increased autonomy for local governments, including in terms of financing. Clustering of local governments was also suggested as a possible option to deal with fragmented governance and lack of economies of scale in order to develop shared infrastructure.

Nexus approaches can and should be embedded into planning frameworks, at both national and local levels, so they become normative. The key role of cross-sectoral and planning ministries as “natural” partners supporting cities in their nexus approaches was emphasized. At the same time, public participation and awareness should be enhanced. Public awareness and communication on the nexus concept and approach are critical for education but also for public mobilization and acceptance of change.

The workshop called for new forms and formats of communication and problem solving. In this regard, the dialogue between national and local governments based on concrete case studies initiated by the project in the Philippines was highlighted as a useful example. Moreover, the workshop highlighted the importance of south-south cooperation and in this regard called for increased dialogue, on par-partnerships and peer-to-peer learning, building on the successful format initiated by the project with the visit to the Bantam sanitary landfill in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

The workshop allowed reviewing also the gender dimensions of the urban nexus. It was noted how gender equality is critical for development in general, and relevant also for the promotion of the nexus approach. Women play a critical role in the management of resources at the household level, especially water, energy and food, and they are also more affected by the lack of access to clean energy, safe drinking water and adequate sanitation. It was recommended that the gender dimensions of nexus project be analyzed and guidelines for addressing gender roles, norms, and relations in nexus planning and management be formulated.

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