

Coping with rapid urbanization and climate change in Asia and the Pacific

Improving shelter, water, sanitation and solid waste management for environmentally harmonious cities

Background:

With the growth in the urban population in Asia, the number and proportion of poor people living in cities is also increasing. While poor people contribute to the environmental degradation of cities due to a lack of access to infrastructure and services, they are also the ones who suffer the most from its consequences. Managing the impact of cities and towns on the local and the global environment is a growing challenge for national and local governments in Asia and the Pacific.

Innovative practices and approaches to build urban infrastructure and deliver environmental services are being developed in many Asian cities by governments, civil society organizations and international agencies. Because many Asian cities face similar challenges, it is important to expose local stakeholders to these practices. World Urban Forum IV will be an opportunity for practitioners and decision makers to review these initiatives and learn from each other.

The event:

The organizers selected three key areas in which local governments and other key stakeholders can learn from each other. Each organization of the consortium will bring selected experts and practitioners to present the most innovative solutions in each of these areas.

Shelter

- The Quick Guides for Housing the Urban Poor will be presented as a new resource for practitioners in the field.
- Habitat for Humanity and UNESCAP will present their experience in slum upgrading in Battambang (Cambodia).
- UN-Habitat will describe its experience in shelter finance and capability building in The Philippines.

Water and Sanitation:

- Citynet will launch the Sanitation Databook for Asian Cities, a collaborative effort between CITYNET, ADB, UNHABITAT and Veolia Environnement to help Asian cities improve their sanitation performance and services.
- UNITAR and UNESCAP will give a preview of their capacity building tools for sanitation, requesting early feedback and expression of interest in using them.

Solid Waste Management:

- AIT-UEM, UN-Habitat and UNESCAP will present new practices in solid waste management that can improve the urban environment, address climate change and generate income for poor citizens.

Open discussions will encourage the interaction of experts and practitioners from different fields and with local governments and other decision makers. The event will move from the dissemination of information to the formulation of actions for implementation through group discussions that will prepare specific proposals.

Considering the number of organizers and expected participants, the event will last for a full day. Although it will be divided into separate sessions, the organizers will maintain its unity by encouraging cross-participation and preparing common conclusions.

Participants:

The event will be open to the public. Each organization in the consortium will promote the participation of a specific target group: local governments, academia, NGOs, research and training institutes or central government agencies.

Each agency present in the meeting will take responsibility for moving ahead the proposed agenda within its own sphere of influence.

Objectives:

1. To analyse innovative approaches to urban environmental management.
2. To discuss the key issues and develop plans for further action
3. To establish partnerships among involved agencies and individuals to address the issues discussed.

The event falls under Sub-theme 3: Environmentally harmonious cities. It will review a set of urban environmental issues, namely solid waste management, water and sanitation, shelter and climate change.

Target audience:

The event is open to all of the above categories. The organizers are from the UN, NGO, Local authorities' networks and academia. Selected resource persons will also come from, central government, academia, research institutes and the private sector. The event will open to the other categories as well. The organizers expect to fund 60 participants.

Each organization in the consortium will promote attendance among its own network, before and during the Forum.

- ESCAP will publicise the event at its intergovernmental meetings and among its own network of partner institutions;
- CITYNET will mobilise its members (more than 100 cities and organisations) and publicise it through its bi-monthly e-news;

- UCLG ASPAC will promote the event among its members and partners through its publications (Newsletter and the Website) and its relevant activities (especially during its 2nd Congress in Pattaya on 15-18 July 2008).

Organizers:

The organizers are a consortium of regional organizations within and outside the UN system that work in Asia and the Pacific. Since WUF3 these organizations held regular consultations within the framework of the Regional Consultative Meetings on Good Urban Governance to prepare for WUF4.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) is coordinating the consortium. UNESCAP is the regional arm of the United Nations in Asia. It has 62 member countries and serves as a forum for discussing economic and social issues in the region. Its secretariat is based in Bangkok (Thailand).

Habitat for Humanity International is a nonprofit organization founded in 1976. It seeks to eliminate poverty housing and homelessness from the world, and to make decent shelter a matter of conscience and action. Habitat has built more than 225,000 houses around the world, providing more than 1 million people in more than 3,000 communities with safe, decent, affordable shelter.

CITYNET is the regional network of local governments set up in 1987 to act as a catalyst for technical cooperation using the concept of multilateral city-to-city cooperation. CITYNET has 109 members, comprising of 60% local governments and 40% municipal associations, CBOs/NGOs, training institutions, private companies, and development authorities, in more than 22 countries.

The UN-Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), established in 1978, is the lead agency within the United Nations system for coordinating activities in the field of housing and urban development. Philippines..

The Asian Institute of Technology promotes technological change and sustainable development in the Asian-Pacific region through higher education, research and outreach. Established in Bangkok in 1959, AIT has become a leading regional postgraduate institution and is actively working with public and private sector partners throughout the region and with some of the top universities in the world.

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