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Ministry of Municipal & Rural Affairs

CPI PROFILE AL-AHSA

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

مستقبل المدن السعودية
FUTURE SAUDI CITIES

The Future Saudi Cities Programme

CPI PROFILE – AL HASA

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Introduction

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) and Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (MOMRA) jointly launched UN-HABITAT Saudi Arabia Programme titled “ Future Saudi Cities Programme (FSCP)”. The UN-HABITAT Office has been providing technical support to the MOMRA and targets 17 key cities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The cities includes Riyadh, Makkah, Jeddah, Taif, Medina, Tabouk, Dammam, Qatif, Ahsa, Abha, Najran, Jazan, Hail, Araar, AlBaha, Buraydah and Sakaka, to respond to national and local urban challenges.

UN- Habitat provides a new approach for measuring urban prosperity: which is holistic, integrated and essential for the promotion and monitoring of socio-economic development, inclusion and progressive realization of the urban-related human rights for all. This new approach redirects cities to function towards a path of an urban future that is economically, politically, socially and environmentally prosperous. The new approach or monitoring framework, The Cities Prosperity Index (CPI), is a multidimensional framework that integrates six carefully selected dimensions and several indicators that relates to factors and conditions necessary for a city to thrive and prosper. The six dimensions includes productivity, infrastructure development, equity and social inclusion, environmental sustainability and urban governance. The CPI uses the concept of The Wheel of Urban Prosperity and the Scale of Urban Prosperity to enable stakeholders to assess achievements in cities. The City Prosperity Index (CPI) not only provide indices and measurements relevant to cities, it is an assessment tool that enables city authorities as well as local and national stakeholders, to identify opportunities and potential areas of intervention for their cities to become more prosperous.

Under FSCP, the UN-HABITAT, MOMRA, and Al Ahsa Municipality together with its Local Urban Observatory has been working on developing urban statistics and spatial information (Geographic Information System) in order to provide relevant urban information that strongly support decision making process on urban development and urban planning in the city.

This CPI Profile Report applies the CPI framework and provide a summary of the basic information and urban statistics about the City and gives an overview of the city’s achievements, opportunities and potential areas that contribute to its prosperity in areas such productivity, infrastructure development, equity and social inclusion, environmental sustainability and urban governance and legislation.

Geography and Location

Al Hasa municipality is located within Al-Ahsa, the largest oasis in the Kingdom. Al-Ahsa is an area that extends from the Arabian Gulf from Kuwait in 29 20' N. to the south point of the Gulf of Bahrain in 25 10' North, a length of about 360 km bounded by the Al-Dahna and the Al-Daman deserts, and forms the border with Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman, covering an area of 2,500 kilometers in the southern part of the Eastern Province. The area around Al Hasa Municipality enjoys a tropical climate with only two seasons: a hot and dry summer and a moderate to becoming warm with occasional showers during winter.

Demographic Background

Al Ahsa or Al Hasa is the major urban center in the Al-Ahsa Oasis in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. The municipality of Al Hasa is comprised of four major cities: Al-Hofuf, Al-Mobarraz, Al-Oyoun, and Al-Oman. According to the housing census of 2010, the population of Al Ahsa municipality was 1,136,935, a mid-term survey conducted in 2016 puts the population at 1,193,373. It has a population density of 4,156 and the population of non-Saudi is about 19%. The number of households in the city is estimated at 160,304 and the average size of each household is 6.7. Looking at the two main cities within the municipality Al-Hofuf and Al-Mobarraz, there is a clear reflection of a very rapid rise in population during the period 1992-2016. It grew from 444,977 in 1992 to 572,908 in 2004, and to 660,788 in 2010, and the current estimate is 768,000 in 2016; this represent a high rate of population increase during the period 1992-2016 (72.6%) which is phenomenon. This rapid increase has sped up the demand for housing units and services. This rapid increase is expected to continue, it has led the local authorities to plan several new housing projects to meet the crutial and urgent demand for housing.

Socio-economic Background

Traditionally life in the oasis depended on the abundant water from the numerous springs that supported agriculture, the oasis produced dates, fruit, rice, wheat, and barley. Historically, Al-Hasa was one of the few areas in Arabian Peninsula growing and exporting rice. The area is famous for its palm trees and dates and has over two million palm trees which produce hundreds of thousands of tons of dates every year. So agriculture has been the source of livelihood for many years. The government through the Ministry of Agriculture has set up a factory to process its rich output of dates, this has resulted in value addition and now farmers are able to earn more money from date farming. There is a big Camel market in Hofuf where camels are traded every Thursday, the city is also a major trade center for dates, wheat, and fruit and has a large mosque which brings people together. The presence of a big market means people can trade their produce and earn income from it. Other popular economic activities in the area includes textile manufacturing, food processing, and Arabian horse breeding. Like all other cities in Saudi Arabia, Al Ahsa Municipality has benefited immensely from the oil industry during the last two decades, the GNI per capita has risen from 24,400 dollars in 1990 to 54730 dollars in 2015 (World Bank, 2016). This reflected positively on per capita income which increased from 21,000 dollars in 2011 to 23,000 dollars in 2012 and to 25,700 dollars in 2013 (Arab News, 2017).

Trend on urban growth in Al Ahsa Province

The Municipality of Al Ahsa and the Al Ahsa Province share the same history and even both are named after the same oasis in which they sit. Al Ahsa municipality itself resulted from the growth of several small cities that merged to form one large municipality called Al Ahsa. The concept of urban growth has two main dimensions, the increase in population and the increase in geographical area or spatial growth. In the early days urban growth in the region was concomitant with the availability of water resources, mainly wells and springs which were spread all over the oasis. The settlements at that time were in form of small number of people surrounding water resources and they depended heavily on traditional material in building their houses. This happened until the early sixties, around 1963.

After the discovery of oil a flourishing economy ensued and the need for planning became apparent, a five-year development plan was adopted by the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Due to a better planning and management of resources the economic situation in the area improved, land use pattern changed, the built-up area increased rapidly and the type of building materials changed and the use of concrete became predominant. By 1994 4.4% of the buildings were still mud and wood, in 2011 all houses were made of concrete or bricks, no mud and wood houses.

These improvements lead to a rapid population growth and increased demand for housing. Therefore, the authorities embarked on the establishment of residential schemes. This has been enhanced by better services and better infrastructure such as roads, water, electricity, and communication networks. Consequently, most of the residents in the old districts have moved to new neighborhoods on the outskirts of the area (Al-Ahsa Municipality, 1998). Due to the rapid expansion the two neighboring cities Hofuf city and Mubarratz city merged.

Since the early sixties, the area has witnessed a significant increase in the total area which has reached approximately 228.69 km² in 2011s, compared to 184.43 km² in 1992. This was accompanied by the increase in the built-up area from 76.5 Km² in 1994 to 91.6 Km² in 2011 and to 287.1 Km² in 2015 including two other merged cities of Al-Oyun, and Al-Oman.

Since the discovery of oil the population in Al Ahsa has increase rapidly and since it is located near oil extraction areas it attracted labour from within Saudi and from other countries. So there is high correlation between the growth of the city and the discovery of oil in the 1930s. Another factor that contributed to the urban growth in the area is the outstanding role made by government to have balanced development among regions. In this context, Al-Ahsa Province was chosen as one of the national growth centers based on the development strategy of the kingdom. The development of the industrial sector is one of the most prominent official efforts in achieving socio-economic development in this area.

Al-Ahsa area could face many future challenges regarding both, population growth and urban expansion. Most of the lands outside the urban cluster belongs to Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO) on the west, the urban cluster is surrounded by palm farms on the east, the storage activities are the most obstacles that hinder urban expansion. The question that should be asked therefore is the future of the urban growth in the current condition. Urban growth therefore should be well managed within the planning process to avoid negative impact on the surrounding.

Cities Prosperity Index (CPI) Assessment

Prosperity is about successfully meeting today's needs without compromising tomorrow and working together for a smart, competitive economy, in a socially inclusive society and a healthy, vibrant environment for individuals, families, and communities. In order to assess the current situation and determine future progress of cities along the path to prosperity, UN-Habitat introduced a monitoring framework, the Cities Prosperity Index. This index, along with a conceptual matrix, the Wheel of Urban Prosperity, are intended to help decision-makers and partners to use existing evidence and formulate clear policy interventions for their cities. The UN-Habitat's Cities Prosperity Index (CPI) allows authorities and local groups to identify opportunities and potential areas for action or adjustments in order to make their cities more prosperous.

The City Prosperity Index (CPI) is a multidimensional measurement framework that integrates several dimensions and indicators that are not only related but have a direct and indirect influence on each other on the path to prosperity. These components are embodied in the following six dimensions: Productivity, Infrastructure Development, Quality of life, Equity and social inclusion, Environmental sustainability, and Governance and legislation.

Since the indicators of prosperity are measured in different units, the CPI computation starts with the standardization/normalization of the indicators into values ranging between 0 and 1¹; the standardized values are aggregated stepwise to create the single value called the City Prosperity Index. The chart below shows the six-point scale of urban prosperity.

¹ Can also be expressed in percentages so that values range between 0% and 100%, as used in this report.

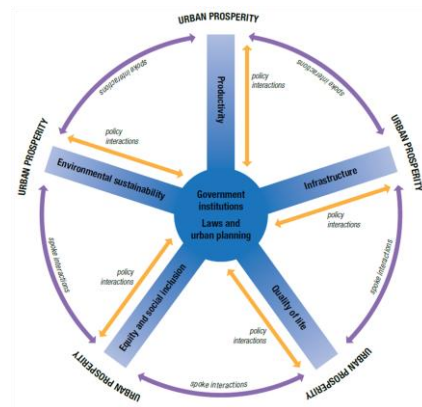
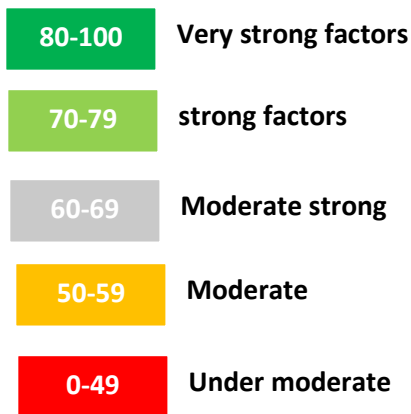


Figure 2: Scale of Urban Prosperity and the Wheel of Urban Prosperity

This section applies the CPI framework, the concept of the Wheel of Urban Prosperity and the Scale of Urban Prosperity to conduct an assessment of the level of prosperity in the city. The assessment provides an indication of the strengths or weaknesses in the factors of prosperity (using the scale of urban prosperity); it also provides an indication of the level of achievement towards the set prosperity goals called benchmarks (through the CPI scores); and highlights the level of balance among the factors by showing whether there are disparities between and within the six dimensions of prosperity (Wheel of Urban Prosperity-stressing balance). A synthesis of the findings culminating into a detailed SWOT Analysis which will help to identify which particular dimensions or sub-dimensions or indicators contributes to the strengths or weaknesses of the city and which ones creates opportunities or threats to the city as it moves towards achieving high levels of shared prosperity.

Data Challenges and Solutions.

The biggest challenge facing CPI implementation work is availability of data at city level, this problem is compounded by the fact that most statistics are not produced do not segregate between rural and urban i.e. city boundaries are not considered. In the case of Saudi Arabia most data is available at regional level and may include rural areas within the region. The other problem is that

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