



Background Paper

Expert Group Meeting

Mainstreaming Climate Change into National Urban Policies

United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok, Thailand
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Acknowledgement

This paper has been prepared by a team of staff members from UN-Habitat's Cities and Climate Change Initiative and the Sustainable Urban Development Section, Environment and Development Division of UNESCAP. The authors are: Bernhard Barth (UN-Habitat), Joris Oele (UN-Habitat), Donovan Storey (UNESCAP) and Kyungkoo Philip Kang (UNESCAP).

Executive summary

The purpose of this paper is to provide some background information on the project ‘Mainstreaming climate change into national urban policies,’ including why this project is important (part 1), what underlying challenges the project is dealing with (part 2), what good practices the project can learn from (part 3) and how this project could be implemented (part 4).

Neither sufficient climate change resilience nor significant greenhouse gas emission reductions can be achieved without local governments playing a more central role. However, local governments can only play their part in responding to the threat of climate change with the support of central governments. Related to this, there are important emerging actions at the national and urban level from which to learn, and build upon. Yet, these efforts remain inadequate in the face of one of the biggest challenges to sustainable development: climate change. Much more needs to be done, especially in closing governance gaps.

The project ‘Mainstreaming climate change into national urban policies’ focuses on supporting local and national governments in strengthening national and multilevel governance climate change frameworks for cities, recognizing that climate change frameworks need to incorporate the local and urban dimensions, and urban frameworks need to recognize climate change.

In order to mainstream climate change into national urban policies, national governments need to understand what barriers to overcome and what opportunities to embrace. This project will assist national governments in the Asia-Pacific region with identifying these barriers and opportunities.

Multi-level governance and Mainstreaming Climate Change

“Multi-level governance recognizes that national governments cannot effectively implement national climate strategies without working closely with regional and local governments as agents of change. On the other hand, to take action, cities cannot be effective and do not operate in isolation from other parts of government. Local governmental authority to act in areas related to climate change is often ‘nested’ in legal and institutional frameworks at higher scales. For example, while regional and local policies determine the specific details of land use, human settlement patterns and transportation planning, the space for action and potential for change is usually limited by national development paths, national policies and technical standards and national budgets and funding priorities. This suggests that action at local scale may enable or constrain what is possible nationally and vice versa, highlighting a two-way relationship between local and national action on climate change.”

OECD (2010) Cities and Climate Change, p.173.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and problem analyses

Background

In the face of a changing global climate, the future of millions of people in Asia and the Pacific will be determined by decisions taken on adaptation and mitigation, and efforts to create more resilient cities.¹ Climate change will provide great challenges for environmental sustainability, the structure of economies, patterns of settlements, livelihoods and employment. This overlays existing unmet needs and challenges in many cities with about one third of the region's urban population now estimated to live in slums. It is these communities that are most vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

Both city planning and climate change are addressed in the Rio+20 outcome document (The Future We Want²). Rio +20 emphasized a holistic approach to urban development, highlighting the importance of addressing negative impacts of climate change. At Rio climate changes was seen as undermining the ability of all countries, in particular, developing countries, to achieve sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals.

The problem

Neither sufficient climate change resilience nor significant greenhouse gas emission reductions can be achieved without local governments playing a more central role. However, local governments can only meet this need with the support and guidance of central governments.

There are important emerging actions at the urban level from which to learn, and build upon. Cities in the Asia and Pacific region have started to respond to climate change by exploring low carbon development paths and by building up their resilience through, for instance, integrating climate change concerns into their planning (e.g. climate change action plans) and policy framework.

Related to these efforts, some national governments have started working with local governments in their response to climate change with supporting policies, budgets and capacity development assistance. Global efforts (e.g. COP21³, the SDGs⁴ and Habitat III⁵) are also emerging to recognize the role of local governments and urban stakeholders

Yet, all these efforts remain inadequate in the face of one of the biggest challenges to sustainable development: climate change. Much more needs to be done, especially in closing governance gaps. Some key bottlenecks for change include:

¹ 'Resilient cities' refers to the capacity of cities (individuals, communities, institutions, businesses and systems) to survive, adapt, and thrive in the face of stress and shocks, and even transform when conditions require it.

² Rio+20 was the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2012.

The Rio+20 outcome document 'the future we want' can be found online:

http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/rio20_outcome_document_complete.pdf

³ In 2015 COP21 (Conference of Parties) will aim to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on climate, with the aim of keeping global warming below 2°C. COP21 website: <http://www.cop21paris.org/>

⁴ The SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) are targets relating to future international development. They will replace the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) once they expire in 2015.

SDG website: <http://www.sustainabledevelopment2015.org/>

⁵ Habitat III is the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development. It will take place in Quito, Ecuador, in 2016. Habitat III website: <http://unhabitat.org/habitat-iii/>

1. Limited local and national capacities to address climate change challenges, aggravated by limited documentation and dissemination of good practices and regional support;
2. Limited funding for climate change responses, particularly at the local level;
3. Lack of political will since climate change is still seen as a threat well beyond the electoral cycle; and
4. National urban policy and legal frameworks that do not anticipate and manage rapid urban growth and climate change.

Bottlenecks to be urgently addressed

‘National policy frameworks’ could play a critical role in addressing these gaps, and support the implementation of local climate change actions. These frameworks, which may include policies, laws, financial mechanisms and cooperation mechanisms, are needed to 1) clearly spell out the roles and responsibilities regarding climate change mitigation and adaptation of government actors at all levels and 2) facilitate local access to national and international climate change funds. The problem tree below illustrates these challenges and the existing gaps.

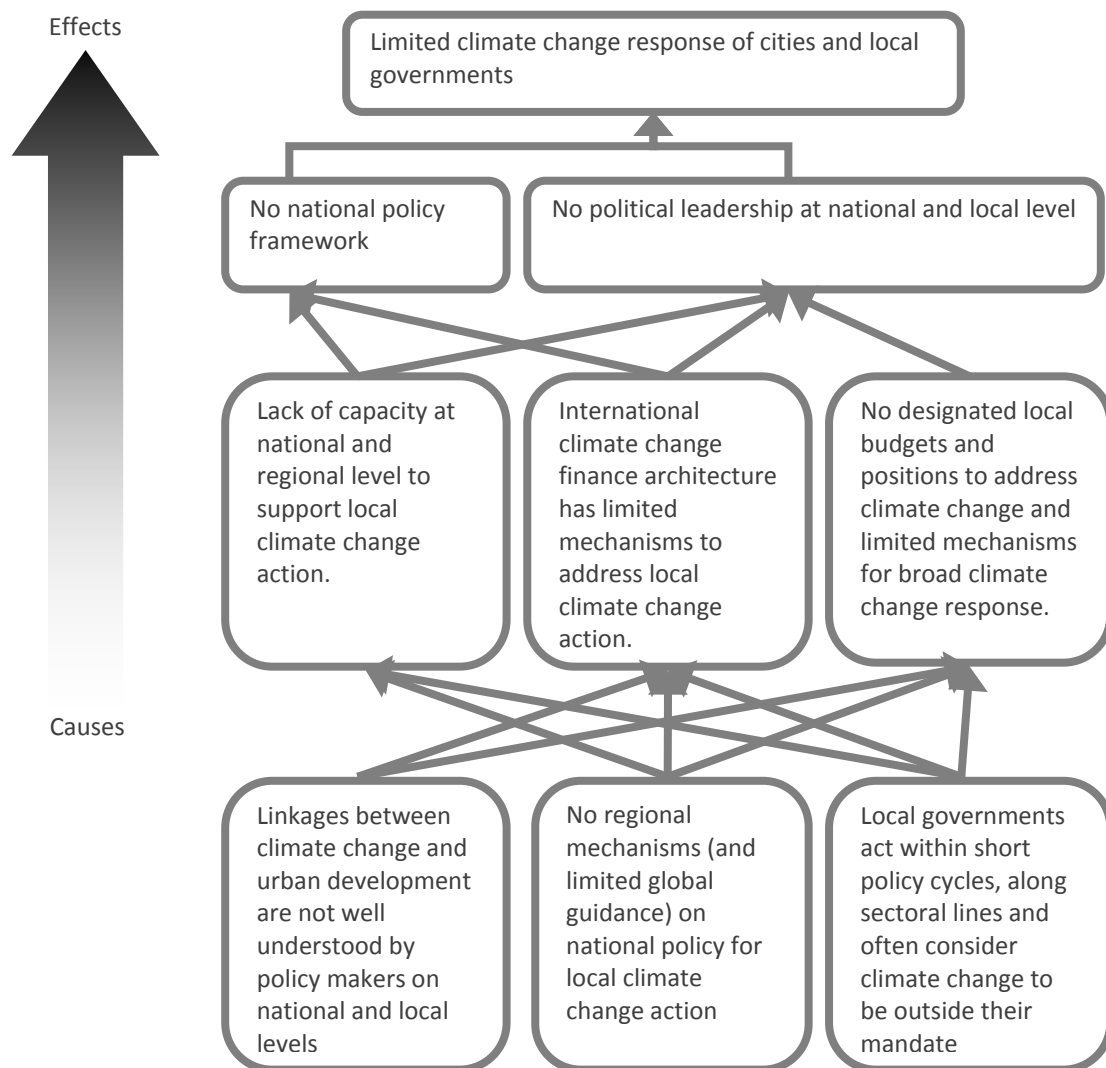


Figure 1: Problem tree showing the causes and effects

1.2 The project

Strategy to address the problem

This project focuses on supporting local and national governments in strengthening national and multilevel governance climate change frameworks for cities, recognizing that climate change frameworks need to incorporate the local and urban dimensions, and urban frameworks need to recognize climate change.

The emphasis of this project is on climate change adaptation, including ecosystems-based adaptation and disaster risk reduction through integrating climate change concerns into national urban policies and planning processes. These priorities were identified by city representatives from the Asia and Pacific Region at a UN-Habitat-organized conference on cities and climate change governance in Sri Lanka in 2012 as the most strategic entry points to leverage support needed to address the bottlenecks mentioned above, in particular climate change finance.

Key Objective

The overarching key objective of the project is to strengthen the capacity of national governments and urban stakeholders in the Asian and Pacific region to integrate climate change concerns into national urban policies and planning processes.

Expected accomplishments (EA)

There are two key expected accomplishments for the project, which will be supported through a number of activities:

1. Enhanced capacity of national governments in 5 selected countries to address the urban dimension of climate change through national urban policies/legislative reform.
2. Enhanced commitment of national and local governments and other stakeholders in the Asia and Pacific Region to incorporate climate change concerns into national urban policies.

Activities (A)

- 1.1. Organize regional Expert Group Meeting;
- 1.2. Conduct in-depth (country) assessments of national urban related policies and legislation;
- 1.3. Provide advisory services and build national government capacities (through national workshops) in support of the policy and legislative review process;
- 1.4. Provide assistance to build local capacities in support of multi-sectoral and broad based pilot city intervention to inform national urban policy and legislative review;

Above activities from 1.1. to 1.4. are most relevant for country representatives.

- 2.1. Draft regional guidelines for national policy and legislative review on how to enhance urban related policies and legislation;
- 2.2. Organize two sub-regional workshops to review/validate the draft guidelines and to adapt them to specific sub-regional realities/needs as appropriate;
- 2.3. Conduct training workshop on national urban policy and legislative reform processes;
- 2.4. Provide comprehensive training package available online.

Timeframe

Expected Accomplishment	Main activity	Timeframe activities											
		2015			2016			2017					
EA1	A1.1	■											
	A1.2		■	■	■								
	A1.3						■						
	A1.4		■	■	■	■							
EA2	A2.1						■						
	A2.2							■	■				
	A2.3									■	■		
	A2.4									■	■		
	Evaluation									■	■		

Key partners and possible implementation partners

UN-Habitat's Cities and Climate Change Initiative is actively engaging with local and national governments in more than 15 countries in the Asia and Pacific region. **UNEP** has conducted reviews of national laws to mainstream climate change, and also recognizes the need to prioritize the urban dimension. **UNESCAP**, through its convening power, provides regional platforms to support legislative and policy reform.

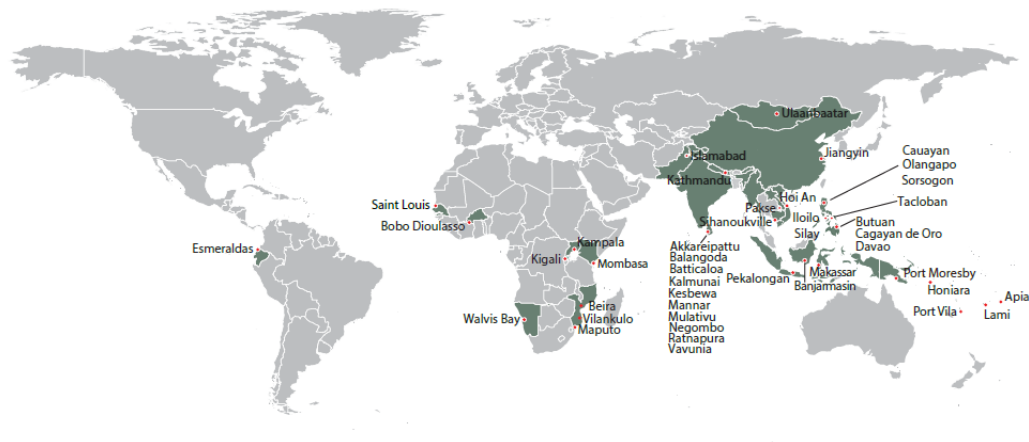


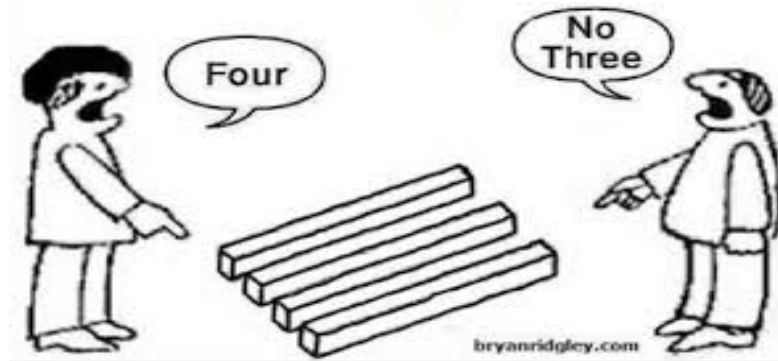
Figure 2: UN-Habitat Cities and Countries

For the project participating countries have been identified. These include: Bangladesh, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Mongolia and Myanmar. Partners at national level include key National Government Ministries / Departments, primarily those with urban and local governance mandates as well as Climate Change Commissions and other national stakeholders with climate change mandates. Partners at the local level include Local Governments and their associations and local government training providers.

1.3 The Expert Group Meeting (EGM)

Purpose

The EGM is organized with the purpose to kick-off the project and to ensure that the proposed country-level activities and implementation modalities of the project are fully agreed upon with the country representatives (country teams) and UN-Habitat, UNESCAP and UNEP.



Objectives

- Share most effective practices on national enabling policy frameworks for local climate change action;
- Agree on a framework to assess national-level urban policies, housing policies, urban planning policies and climate change policies;
- Draft 'initial' country-specific work plans

Expected outcomes

- Draft assessment framework
- Draft 'initial' country-specific work plans

The assessment framework and work plans are needed for the next activity (A1.2) under the project: to conduct in-depth assessments, including broad-based stakeholder consultations, of national urban related policies and legislation to enhance climate change responsiveness in the 5-8 selected countries in the Asian and Pacific regions with the purpose to identify policy and legislative gaps and opportunities to address these. UNEP and UN-Habitat will collaborate in the policy review – national consultants will conduct this work which will be validated in national stakeholder consultations.

2 What are the underlying challenges?

2.1 Rapid urbanization

Why is urbanization especially relevant to the Asia-Pacific region?

The Asia-Pacific region is in the midst of the largest and most consequential urban transformation in human history. Between 1980 and 2010 Asian cities grew by around one billion people and according to projections will grow by another billion by 2040. By 2050, nearly two out of three people in the Asia-Pacific region will live in urban areas.

This population growth has gone hand in hand with economic transformation and for many countries urbanization has been an important driver of national development. But it has also put tremendous pressure on infrastructure, services, livelihoods and the environment.

Climate change is increasingly exacerbating existing challenges. Sea-level rise, and extreme events, such as storms, floods or droughts are interacting with human impacts, such as degraded and altered biophysical environments. This creates complex and distinctly urban patterns of risk and impact, to which cities and their populations need to respond. Although precise projections are difficult, it is likely that future impacts will be significant.

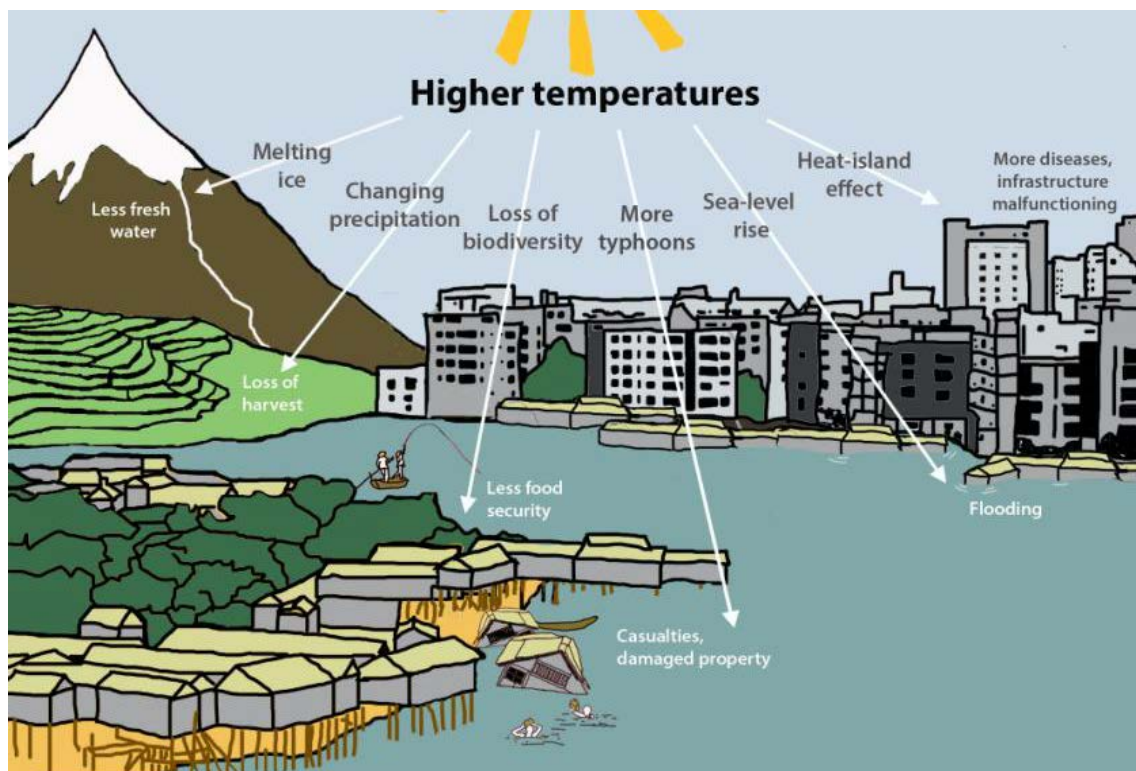


Figure 3: Climate change and cities: understanding the risks. Illustration by Daphna Beerdsen and Joris Oele.

- **Link:** Problems of and solutions for rapid urbanization: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxHszAP-lqY>

2.2 Climate change

Why is climate change especially relevant to the Asia-Pacific region?

Asia and the Pacific is the most disaster-prone and climate change-affected region in the world. Between 2000 and 2010, 8 out of the 12 largest disasters impacting on cities took place in Asia and the Pacific. Today more than half of the region's urban population lives in cities and towns that are located in low-lying, coastal or riparian areas on the frontline of climate change.

The interaction of climate change, poverty and vulnerability

High urbanization rates and scarcity of land (leading to high land prices), leave newcomers (and poor people) with little choice but to reside on 'at risk' land: along waterways, on slopes, areas without drainage systems, poorly constructed houses, etc., making them especially vulnerable to climate change. Their limited capacity and limited official recognition to prepare for and respond to climate related hazards, such as flooding, contribute to this. As a result, the cost of a major disaster frequently affects poor communities far more severely. In the Philippines, poor urban households suffered 90 per cent of the US \$ 4.3 billion in damage caused by Typhoon Ketsana in 2009.

Slums reflect what people can do given their limited choices and income. While they constitute a broader urban development challenge, they also are the outcome of many independent strategies where formal alternatives have failed to meet needs. In many cases governments can work effectively with urban poor communities, taking their settlements, living and working arrangements as a starting point. In some instances people need to move out of harm's way - but often, significant improvements can be achieved on-site at less cost and with less disruption to social networks and bonds. To achieve this, a shift in mindsets is required where urban poor communities are considered as integral partners in development, enabling them to contribute to solutions.⁶

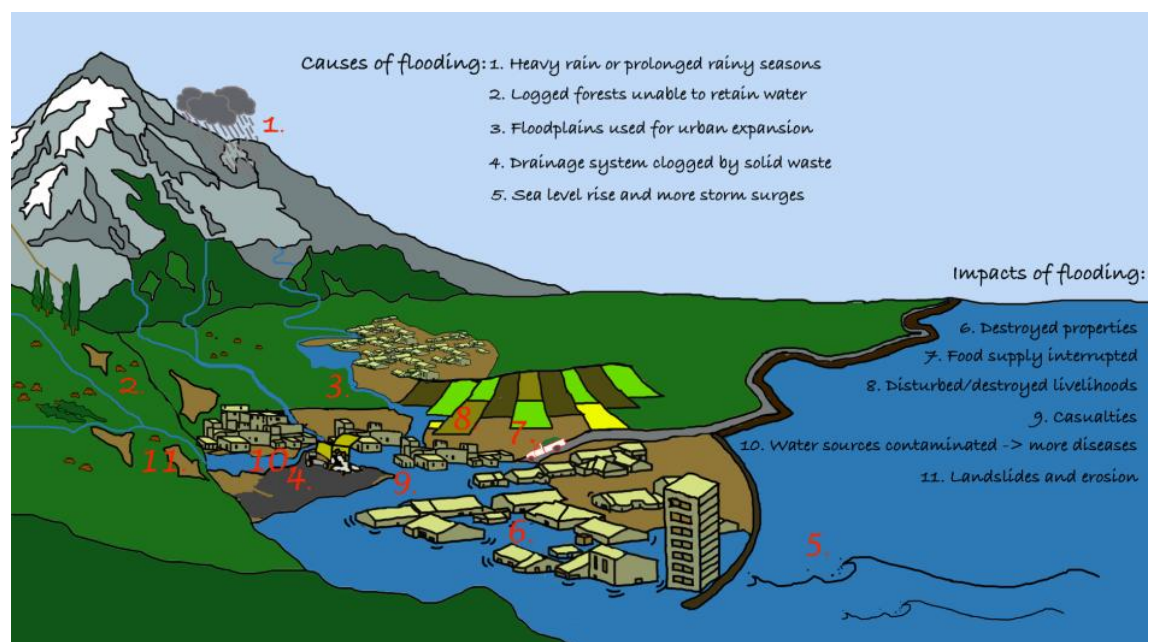


Figure 4: Causes and impacts of flooding. Illustration by Daphna Beerdsen and Joris Oele.

⁶ UN-Habitat, UNESCAP and the Rockefeller Foundation (2014, p.12) *Quick Guide for policy makers. Pro-poor urban climate resilience in Asia and the Pacific.*

- **Link:** UN-Habitat, UNESCAP and the Rockefeller Foundation (2014) *Quick Guide for policy makers. Pro-poor urban climate resilience in Asia and the Pacific.*
<http://www.unescap.org/resources/quick-guide-policy-makers-pro-poor-urban-climate-resilience-asia-and-pacific-0>

2.3 Governance and institutional limitations

There are significant challenges in harmonizing institutional responses to the many and complex challenges of climate change. Overall there is a need for greater synergies between national and local government policies and strategies, but often these links are missing. Though such challenges are important to a lesser or greater extent across the region, regulatory frameworks, finance, human and other resources all play an important role.

One of the key opportunities for the project is to identify governance challenges, and what can and should be done to effectively close governance gaps where they exist. These gaps may be vertical (with regard to different 'levels' of government) or horizontal (regarding sectoral divides). In responding to climate change there is a great opportunity to first identify the problems, then demonstrate opportunities and the benefits of 'closing the loop' with regards to governance.



Source: <http://www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/wp-content/uploads/Mind-the-Gap.jpg>

3 What has been the response?

3.1 Examples of good practices

Germany's National Climate Initiative (NCI)

Since its launch in 2009, 'Germany's National Climate Initiative' has successfully promoted and advanced local climate action throughout Germany. This has been done by using financial incentives (direct budget support) and by advising municipalities. One of the main accomplishments is the development and implementation of local climate action plans, including concrete climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, which have been financed through the so-called 'municipal guidelines' - a national funding instrument for municipalities. In addition to the financial incentives, the National Climate Initiative promotes multilevel governance, which includes the strengthening of vertical and horizontal policy coordination and sharing of good practices among municipalities.

The Philippines: efforts to rationalize and streamline requirements for local planning

In early 2009, the Philippines passed its groundbreaking Climate Change Act into law. This law carves out a substantial role for local authorities in adapting to and mitigating climate change. One of its provisions is for local government units to prepare and regularly update Local Climate Change Action Plans. Initial implementation of this provision took place within the context of a multi-year process to consolidate a disparate group of local-level planning requirements that had accumulated over time. Officials consolidated these requirements into two major planning tools: the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and the Comprehensive Development Plan. Bearing in mind this effort, the Department of the Interior and Local Government developed guidelines to mainstream climate change planning into those two principal tools, rather than require a new stand-alone plan. In 2011 and 2012, the Department of the Interior and Local Government undertook training of trainers, tested the new requirements in three pilot Local Government Units, and then rolled them out to more than 50 Local Government Units.⁷

Brazil: a building code that promotes energy efficiency in São Paulo (mitigation)

In São Paulo, water heating is estimated to account for 40 per cent of the city's electricity consumption. In 2007 an ordinance was included in the municipal building code that requires new residential, commercial and industrial buildings to install solar hot water heating systems to cover at least 40 per cent of the energy used for heating water. The regulation applies to all new buildings with four or more bathrooms and buildings (new or existing) that have large additional hot water needs such as swimming pools or industrial uses. Small residential buildings are not required to install solar hot water but are required to have the infrastructure in place to enable future installation. Noncompliance with the regulation can lead to the withdrawal of the building permit.⁸

⁷ Kehew, R., Kolisa, M., Rollo, C., Callejas, A., Alber, G., & Ricci, L. (2013). Formulating and Implementing Climate Change Laws and Policies in the Philippines, Mexico (Chiapas) and South Africa: A local government perspective. *Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability*, 18(6), 305-315.

⁸ ICLEI. (2013). Local Government Regulation, Ordinances and Laws to Promote Renewable Energy. http://www.irena.org/Publications/RE_Policy_Cities_CaseStudies/IRENA%20cities%20case%206%20Sao%20Paulo.pdf

Malaysia: National Urban Policy (NUP), the creation of a conducive liveable urban environment with identity

The National government in Malaysia developed a national policy for urban development. This policy includes one main principle stating that: ‘a sustainable and environmentally friendly development shall form the basis of environmental conservation and improve the urban quality of life.’ Measures to accomplish this include:

1. Ensure that urban development is given emphasis to reduce air, noise and water pollution and is compatible with rivers.
2. Enforce legislation, guidelines and standards relating to environmental conservation.
3. Encourage development that reduces the impact of urban heat islands.
4. Review guidelines and standards relating to environment.

Disaster management in Bangladesh: the role of local government

Bangladesh’s draft National Plan for Disaster Management 2008–2015 recognises that ‘climate change adds a new dimension to community risk and vulnerability. Although the magnitude of these changes may appear to be small, they could substantially increase the frequency and intensity of existing climatic events (floods, droughts, cyclones etc). Current indications are that not only will floods and cyclones become more severe, they will also start to occur outside of their “established seasons”. Events, such as drought, may not have previously occurred in some areas and may now be experienced.

The Plan calls for the establishment of Disaster Management Committees at all sub-national levels (Districts, Upazilas, UPs, Pourashavas and City Corporations), charged with developing Disaster Management Plans (DMPs) for their respective jurisdictions. DMPs are expected to include provisions for: (i) reducing and mitigating disasters; (ii) disaster response; (iii) post-disaster recovery; and (iv) costings for each. The nested hierarchy of DMPs is intended to use local knowledge to build a bottom-up approach to disaster mitigation and response and to ensure higher levels of overall coordination at the local levels.⁹

⁹ Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh (2008).

4 How to implement this project?

4.1 Information Gaps

In order to mainstream climate change into national urban policies, national governments / ministries need to understand what barriers to overcome and what opportunities to embrace. In order to do so, answering the following questions could be helpful:

Problems:

- What are the main problems related to climate change and urbanization in the country and in cities?

Policy directives

- What are the most important national policies that promote or cripple climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts in cities? These could include laws, regulations and plans.
- What are the main opportunities for better integrating climate change into policies in the coming years (e.g. through sectoral entry points)?

Financing

- What are the roles and responsibilities regarding climate change financing are at all government levels (national, regional, local)?
- What are the best options for funding local climate change action from the national level?

Capacities

- What capacities are lacking to respond to climate change at all government levels (national, regional, local)
- What support can national governments offer in building the capacity of local governments.

Institutional arrangements

- Who are the main actors (from government, business and community, but especially from the national government) influencing (driving or blocking) climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts. In particular, how do they influence processes? What are the barriers (e.g. roles and responsibilities) and opportunities for collaboration between different key actors or for the national government to support local governments?
- What main national level actors are influencing urban development? In particular, how could climate change (adaptation and mitigation) become more important in their agenda?

National governments can acquire this information with a policy, legislative and capacity review. Methodologies (i.e. tools) to do this are discussed below.

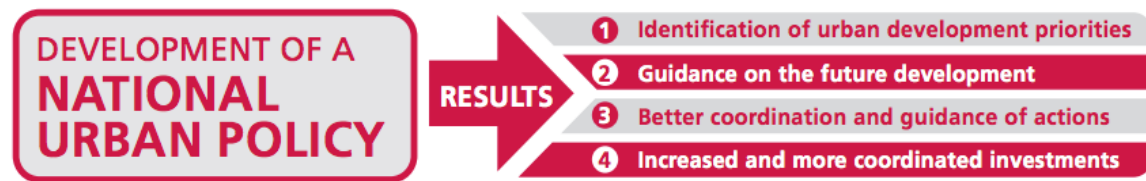
4.2 Methods to review policies

Policy Assessment framework options

There are many methods to review / assess policies. However, only a few methods are relevant for reviewing national urban policies and city related climate change policies. These include:

- 1 UN-Habitat's National Urban policy framework
- 2 UNEP's climate change policy assessment framework
- 3 UN-Habitat's Cities and Climate Change Initiative framework

1. UN-Habitat's National Urban policy framework



The development of a national urban policy is vital in providing the needed direction and course of action to support urban development. The Policy provides an overarching coordinating framework to deal with the most pressing issues related to rapid urban development.

Approved at the highest level, a national urban policy should provide the general framework to orient public interventions in urban areas and be a reference for sectoral ministries and service providers. It should also be the key reference for legislative institutional reform. The Policy is also a good instrument for public and political awareness of the gains to be obtained from sustainable urban development, as well as an opportunity to promote consultation with urban stakeholders.¹⁰

While the NUP is context specific, there are three main thematic areas that receive particular attention: (1) urban legislation with focus on buildability or development rights, building code, plotting regulations, and protection of public space; (2) urban economy with particular reference to job creation, land value sharing, municipal finance; and (3) urban planning and design with emphasis on planned city extension, infill, public space, adequate ratio for street -open space-built-up. Sectoral issues such as housing, basic services, infrastructure and multi-level governance ought to be addressed throughout the NUP process as well.¹¹

- Link to 'National Urban Policy (NUP) Framework for a rapid diagnostic':
<http://unhabitat.org/national-urban-policy-framework-for-a-rapid-diagnostic/>

2. UNEP's climate change policy assessment framework

UNEP's 'Guidebook on National Legislation for Adaptation to Climate Change' is 'intended to serve as a tool to help decision-makers and legal drafters to incorporate measures for adapting to the adverse impacts of climate change into their national sustainable development policies, plans and programmes by creating the necessary legal, regulatory and institutional framework for such action. It provides a series of draft legal provisions, founded on the collective suggestions emerging from national experiences of Viet Nam, Laos People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia, which are expected to underpin and support national actions to identify possible adverse impacts of climate change on seventeen key sectors of national economic, social and

¹⁰ UN-Habitat website : <http://unhabitat.org/initiatives-programmes/national-urban-policies/>

¹¹ UN-Habitat (2014) New generation of national urban policy

environmental activities and to develop and implement appropriate adaptation measures to respond to the anticipated consequences.’¹²

- Link to UNEP’s ‘Guidebook on National legislation for adaptation to climate change:’
http://www.imh.ac.vn/c_tt_chuyen_nganh/ab6-.2010-10-28.0527654508/GUIDEBOOK%20ON%20NATIONAL%20LEGISLATION%20FOR%20ADAPTATION%20TO%20CLIMATE%20CHANGE.pdf
http://www.unep.org/delc/Portals/119/publications/Role_Legal_Instruments_Climate_Resilient.pdf

3. UN-Habitat’s Cities and Climate Change Initiative framework

Other than above two frameworks, this framework focuses on local climate change mitigation and adaptation. As shown in the figure below, the focus is on policies, financing, capacities and institutional arrangements, both at the local and national level (enabling framework for local level). In other words, the national framework supports local sustainable, climate change resilient and competitive development.

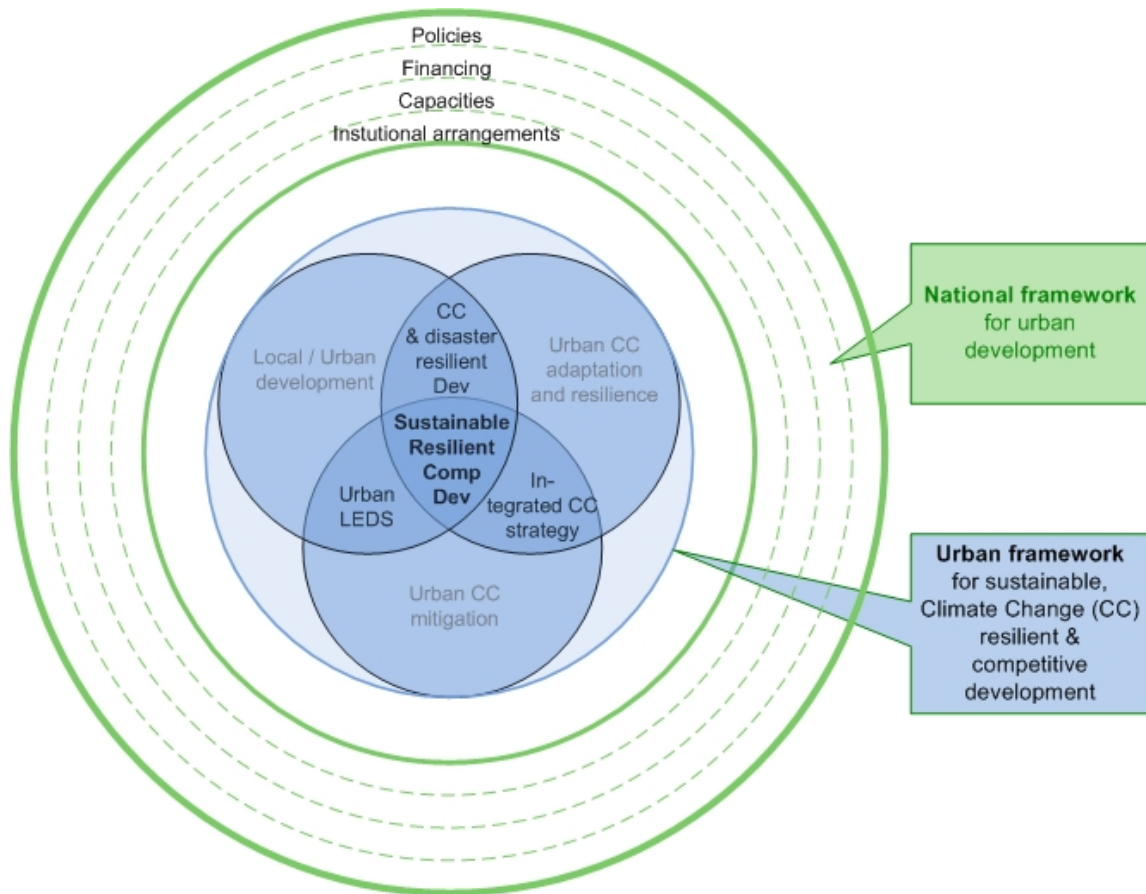


Figure 5: UN-Habitat’s Cities and Climate Change Initiative framework

- Link to CCCI policy note ‘addressing Urban Issues in National Climate Change Policies’ with recommendations for addressing urban issues in national climate change policies
<file:///C:/Users/Oele/Downloads/CCCI%20Note%203%20%20web.pdf>

¹² UNEP (2011, p2). Guidebook on National legislation for adapting to climate change .

4.3 Policy focus

Challenges and opportunities for integrating climate change into policies may differ per country, depending on the existence of a national urban policy/national urbanization framework, decentralization efforts and the relevance of climate change per sector. However, in general the policy focus includes:

- National urban policy / national urbanization framework
- Multi-level governance / decentralization policies
- Spatial / urban planning, incl. building codes
- Housing policy, incl. building codes
- Urban infrastructure policies
- Local role environmental / energy / climate change policies

Recommendations for addressing urban issues in national climate change policies

How can countries deal with climate change in urban areas? Together with 20 countries that developed national climate change policies within the past several years, UN-Habitat sublimated a set of recommendations for addressing urban issues in national climate change policies. These recommendations basically show what options national governments have in reducing the risk of national disaster in cities (in other words: how national governments can assist cities with adapting to climate change) and how national governments can help reducing greenhouse gas in cities. For the list of recommendations, please see the policy note below:

- UN-Habitat Cities and Climate Change policy note no. 3: addressing urban issues in national climate change policies.
<http://unhabitat.org/addressing-urban-issues-in-national-climate-change-policies-cities-and-climate-change-initiative-policy-note-3/>