



AsianCitiesAdapt

Impacts of Climate Change in Target Cities in India and Philippines and Local Adaptation Strategies

Learning Exchange

30-31 October 2013, Cochin, India

Main Outcomes

Co-organised by the Corporation of Cochin and ICLEI South Asia, the "AsianCitiesAdapt Learning Exchange" took place in Cochin, India, on 30 and 31 October 2013. Central subjects of a range of expert presentations and lively discussions were the trends of a changing climate projected for the South and Southeast Asian region, their likely impacts on urban systems as well as a diverse set of options for local governments to prepare their cities for the challenges ahead.

The Learning Exchange attracted more than 100 politicians, local government representatives, practitioners, bilateral agencies, researchers and concerned citizens from a range of Asian and European countries, among them India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, and the Philippines. The audience was composed of representatives from more than 20 Asian cities and researchers from prestigious institutions such as the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, the German Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and the University of the Philippines, as well as of numerous regional experts on climate change adaptation including the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the Cities Development Initiative for Asia (CDIA), ICRIER, TARU and BBC Media Action.

Inaugural session

Honorable Mayor Mr. Tony Chammany of Cochin City presided over this session. The event was jointly inaugurated by four Mayors: Mayor Maizan Ali Maniku from Malé City in the Maldives; Mayor Zulfikar Ali, Mongla, and Shamim Al Razi, Mayor of Singra and Secretary General of the Municipal Association of Bangladesh (MAB), both from Bangladesh, and the Mayor of Cochin, as a symbol of local political commitment to urban climate change adaptation. On stage, together with the Mayors, were Councilor Z. Mohamed Arees, Matale Municipal Council, from Sri Lanka; Deputy Mayor Tikender S Panwar, Shimla and Deputy Mayor Mrs. Bhadra B, Corporation of Cochin.



This conference helped make policy-makers and bureaucrats aware about environmental threats



to people. Let us all work together towards making our cities more resilient through a cooperation between science and governance.

– Mr. Tony Chammany, Mayor, Corporation of Cochin, India

Our beautiful islands are threatened by sea level rise. We need to educate our people and make them aware of how they can protect themselves from climate change impacts.



– Mr. Maizan Ali Maniku, Mayor, Malé City, Republic of the Maldives



Key messages

Benefiting from the technical expertise and the inspirational deliberations of several carefully selected speakers and allowing plenty of time for discussion, a stimulating and interesting debate had been ignited, which led to the identification of the following key messages:

■ Successful adaptation at local level requires an effective dialogue between science and policy

Local governments and research institutions need to establish targeted partnerships to provide a framework for an on-going and mutually fertilising dialogue. Scientists have to get a solid understanding of the realities at the local level and the knowledge and experience embedded in the local communities. On the other hand, local decision-makers and practitioners at all levels should approach climate experts for their science-based advice before finalising and implementing policies and plans.

■ Local governments need to improve city level data monitoring, compilation and maintenance

Investing in building the capacity of local governments to interpret weather information, better understand their city's vulnerabilities and embed this knowledge into local policies, planning processes and adaptation measures will pay back. The accuracy of scientific projections is dependent on the quality of local data that is available, which can be a constraining factor. Effective planning requires data of an adequate quality to be systematically collected at the local level, be it weather data for facilitating climate analysis and projections or that related to the needs and provisioning of basic urban services. Creating partnerships with local stakeholders, such as universities can help involve students for the collection of local information and, for example, promote *crowd sourcing*, which is a relatively cheap yet effective way for data collection. While scientific and other institutions can complement the local administrations' capacity to handle data collection and identify new developments and trends, local governments should also strengthen their internal resources and establish their own mechanisms for dealing with climate change information.

■ Local governments need support in using spatial analysis tools for improved planning and management

Land use is a key element to consider in adaptation planning. Greater emphasis on using spatial analysis tools, e.g. GIS and others, in development planning would significantly help mainstream, for example, land-use or social and economic development priorities with climate adaptation considerations. A range of technologies are easily available - what is needed at the local level is capacity building and systems that help maintain updated maps and other related data.

A much closer relationship between climate and social scientists and urban planners is needed, so that urban and economic development takes into account upcoming climate changes.



— Mr. Tikendar S. Panwar,
Deputy Mayor, Shimla
Municipal Corporation, India

Scientists might not always be able to give definite answers but uncertainty should not be a reason not to act.



— Prof. Dymphna Javier,
University of the Philippines



■ **Climate change needs to be recognised and mainstreamed across all policy sectors**

Political decision-makers need to become leaders in climate adaptation by accepting the realities of climate change and fostering ownership across their administration, as well as among other relevant stakeholders. Local governments can act as *enablers* and *regulators* to promote the mainstreaming of adaptation into conventional development.

■ **Climate change is a complex subject which requires skilled communication**

Skilled communication, in its multi-fold aspects, emerged as one of the main weaknesses in the current discourse on climate change and its implications at city level.

Communication is needed to **raise awareness and facilitate action**: citizens need to be educated on how to deal with climate change impacts and protect themselves from their adverse consequences. The success of any climate adaptation strategy lies in mobilizing vulnerable social groups and other supporting actors to recognise the potential threats and partner in the implementation of adaptation measures. Local governments need to better define who they should talk to, what these people need, and what is the best way of communicating with them. It is important to properly tailor climate change messages to different target groups to achieve better uptake. Co-creating the messages with the beneficiaries themselves by incorporating local knowledge and traditions, and avoiding climate change jargon in favour of concepts that are 'more real' and that people can easily relate to in their daily life (e.g. weather, environment, water) will considerably increase the effectiveness of the city's awareness raising activities.

Targeted communication is also crucial to **engage stakeholders**: all urban actors are needed to prepare and implement the city's adaptation strategy, including government, industry, the academia and scientists, local NGOs, and above all the community - from the household to the regional/state level. Stakeholders must be informed and involved, thus empowering them to contribute to the city's adaptation process.

■ **Peer-to-peer learning exchanges are a key mechanism for catalysing action for climate change adaptation**

Cities are eager to share adaptation strategies, exchange information and best practices and learn from each other and other relevant institutions. Participating in events such as the AsianCitiesAdapt Learning Exchange, having access to case studies and experts and being part of city/learning networks enhance local governments' abilities, knowledge and motivation to take action. Climate change adaptation is a *learning process*, therefore such opportunities for face-to-face and multi-dimensional interactions are very effective.

What can drive mainstreaming Climate Change Adaptation in local



development is ensuring executive and legislative support; gaining the commitment of the main stakeholders and having access to learning networks.

— Ms. Cordelia C. Lacsamana, Baguio City, Philippines

Bangladesh is hit almost every year by natural disasters, but we are very enterprising and innovative people. I will



take back the learning from this workshop to my community and work with them to make the city of Singra more resilient.

— Mr. Shamim Ali Razi, Mayor, Singra Municipality, and Secretary General, Municipal Association of Bangladesh (MAB)



■ **Climate change needs to be localised and connected to current challenges**

Another message that came out very clearly was the need to localise climate change and link it to current issues in the city. The data presented, the climate changes projected, the impacts expected – these must be specific to the city and surrounding area, to convey the message that climate change is not only a global discussion, but a local challenge as well. Further, they need to be connected to current and local issues in order to effectively engage key actors e.g. by assessing projected impacts on already fragile or problematic urban systems and devising prioritised adaptation strategies that address both current and future vulnerabilities. Solutions built on existing (even if informal) coping systems to address current risks are more likely to succeed than new and innovative, but locally unfeasible, ones.

Climate change adaptation, differently to disaster risk management, is a continuous requirement, a **dynamic process** of planning, implementing, reviewing and revising. It is important to not focus only on preventing disasters, but to concentrate on daily issues too, whose cumulative related losses over time are often greater than those caused by larger-scale impacts.

■ **Being innovative will allow local governments to access existing funding opportunities for climate adaptation**

Cities need to prioritise sustainable infrastructure and development investments; this raises the question on how to access the necessary finances. Funding opportunities are available, be it through existing government schemes, international funding programmes, through self-generation of revenues, shifting local budget priorities and thus allocations or by partnering up with the private sector. However, there is a need to be **innovative and progressive** in the proposals that are prepared and to develop an improved understanding of local vulnerabilities and risks. Investing in adaptation measures is good for business, as addressing a potential risk now will help saving considerable damage-related costs later. Measures for climate change adaptation can also contribute to poverty alleviation.

In India we need a strong political will to bring forward local adaptation strategies



- without this, it will not be possible to execute the programmes and projects we all have in mind for our cities. Seeing so many political representatives at this workshop is a signal that things are changing.

– Mr.T. Lyngwa, CEO, Shillong Municipal Board, India

There are several funding opportunities easily accessible to local governments; cities should take advantage of market mechanisms such as PPPs to get the private sector on-board and fully use the potential of CSR money available.




– Dr Rachna Arora, GIZ

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For more information visit: www.asian-cities-adapt.org

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Project Partners



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