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ISSUE 3 | JULY 2013

South Asia Urban newsletter

THE WORLD BANK

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Over 80 representatives from seven South Asian countries gathered in Thimphu, Bhutan to attend the regional workshop

Government funded housing projects, such as ChangJiJi in Thimphu provide housing for low income civil servants.

The Dechencholing Local Area Plan, piloted land-pooling and land readjustment methods, an innovative tool for servicing land with public infrastructure. The project will provide housing to 187 households.

Highlights from South Asia Regional Workshop: Promoting Access to Affordable Land and Housing

The third South Asia regional workshop held between June 3rd and 5th, 2013, at Thimphu, Bhutan, brought together government officials, urban policymakers and practitioners for an informative dialogue on "Promoting Access to Affordable Land and Housing." The participants discussed unique and common challenges, lessons learned, and practical solutions covering the multiple dimensions of this topic and the interlinked thematic areas of development in the context of each South Asia country and the region.

Main challenges and take-aways from the workshop

At the three-day event, the discussion was centered on long and short-term strategies and implementation tools used to deliver equitable access to land and housing, such as regional plans, and strategic plans, while accounting for institutional, technical, and financial capacity of government entities. Several thought-provoking questions were raised: Should cities accommodate people or divert people? Should public policies promote rental housing or homeownership? How can slums be effectively integrated into cities? What are the costs of upgrading versus greenfield development?

The take-aways summarized by Ming Zhang and Martin Rama, who emphasized that "urbanization is occurring and is unstoppable," resonated with the participants. Some final observations included: (i) One size does not fit all, and therefore, policy and implementation approaches should be tailored to the local context, and account for trial and error over time. (ii) Evidence-based analysis grounded in solid data indicative of trends and needs over time should be embedded in policy decision-making. Multiple data tools, such as, cadastral data, geo-referenced household surveys, satellite maps, census data, could be combined to fill data gaps, and present a comprehensive storyline. (iii) Slums and informal housing should be recognized as a part of the urban fabric and rebranded by changing their language and visual. Recognizing the linkages between informal job markets and formal and informal settlements in land use and infrastructure planning will support growth and socio-economic well-being. (iv) A combination of long-term, intermediate, and short-term planning allows better management of immediate priorities and future vision. In this respect, urban plans are important tools for interagency coordination, and more importantly, giving the public a seat at the table, because as one participant pointed out, "If you are not at the table, you are food."

The presentations from the workshop are available for download, by clicking here. Judy Deng and Chyi-Yun Huang shared their thoughts in the following blog posts: (i) Urbanization and Affordable Housing; (ii) The Development of Secondary Cities in South Asia; and (iii) Is Urban Planning Necessary?

To listen to webinar recording and read the discussion, click here.

Interesting Readings

Click on links

Housing the poor in Asia Cities

Rental Housing : Lessons from International Experience and Policies for Emerging Markets

Urbanization beyond Municipal Boundaries : Nurturing Metropolitan Economies and Connecting Peri-Urban Areas in India

India—12th Five Year Plan Hackathon

The Poverty Line—what it means to be poor in different countries

Urbanization Webinar Series

Upgrading Housing in Informal Settlements

The urban population of developing countries will double over the next 30 years and UN-Habitat estimates that approximately 3 billion people will need housing and basic infrastructure over the next 25 years. Furthermore, already 70 percent of existing housing in the developing world is built informally without appropriate structural standards. Thus, the challenge lies in reconciling this informality and interaction of informal settlements with the existing and future built-environment of a city. In light of these challenges, the South Asia urban team at the World Bank, as part of its urbanization webinar series, organized a discussion on "Upgrading Housing in Informal Settlements." This webinar highlighted the challenges of upgrading housing in informal settlements, and shared lessons from around the globe where targeted policy interventions and grassroots movements have mobilized resources to create success stories. Guest speakers, Julian Baskin (Cities Alliance, Senior Urban Upgrading Specialist), Elisabete Franca (Sao Paulo City Government, former Housing Deputy Secretary), Tasneem Siddiqui (Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority, former Director General), and participants from different parts of the world joined the discussion on informal settlements.

Country Feature — India

As India follows in the footsteps of other developed countries towards urbanization, questions on the corrective actions and pre-emptive policy measures to balance growth and equitably distribute the benefits arise. Politicians and policymakers alike have voiced concerns of uneven distribution of economic activity, and in turn rising socio-economic disparity. Already dense metropolitan cities, Mumbai, Calcutta, Delhi, are reeling under pressures of high cost of living for their residents and unaffordable land and built areas. This in turn impact manufacturing activities and enterprise formation. However, the benefits of co-existence in these high-density cities, despite congestion costs, which manifests in agglomeration economies continue to attract immigrants and entrepreneurs. Research studies have highlighted the benefits and trade-offs of these agglomeration economies and presented some underlying dynamics in the article-"Spatial disparities in India-Have Mumbai and Chennai become too congested?" *(Klaus Desmet, Ejaz Ghani, Stephen D O'Connell, Esteban Rossi-Hansberg)* An important trend observed by analyzing enterprise data on formal and informal sectors, is the relocation of organized manufacturing sector from high-density clusters to less congested areas, thus becoming more spatially dispersed. Service sector remains the dominating contributing factor to India's growth. It is the services and unorganized sectors, which are attracted to the high-density metropolitan areas, implying different policy intervention. For more details read: "Is India's manufacturing sector moving out of the cities?" *(Ejaz Ghani, Arti Grover Goswami, William Kerr)*

According to World Bank estimates, South Asia is facing a shortage of 38 million housing units, largely affecting low and middle-income households. India alone has 52,000 slums inhabited by 14 percent of its total population. Almost, 50 percent of total population in Karachi, i,e, 7.6 million persons, lives in Katchi-Abadis. Bangladesh has 2,100 slums and more than 2 million slum dwellers in Dhaka. In Afghanistan, 80 percent of residents in capital city, Kabul live in informal settlements

We look forward to your comments and feedback!

Contact Us!

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