SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

Over the past two decades, several international development agencies have attempted to resolve the problems of modernist urban planning in developing and transitional countries by introducing special programmes and processes into local government systems. The aim of these programmes has been to attempt to make local authorities more responsive to other urban stakeholders, and to attend to particular urban issues which are considered important. In recent years, some of these 'sector action plans' have focused on poverty, gender, crime and safety, health, heritage and the environment, among others.

SOLUTION 1: THE URBAN MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

The Urban Management Programme (UMP) is one of the largest such global programmes. It was established in 1986 by the Urban Development Unit of the World Bank in partnership with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (now UN-HABITAT) and funded by the United Nations Development Programme. The Cities Alliance organization also emerged from this grouping.

The UMP's overall mission is the promotion of socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements and adequate shelter for all. Its objective is the reduction of urban poverty and social exclusion. It seeks to achieve this by providing technical assistance in managing urban land; urban environment; municipal finance; urban infrastructure; and urban poverty.

The UMP also seeks to strengthen the capacity of urban managers to cope with the challenges associated with rapid urban growth. In addition, the UMP attempts to shift the concept of planning and development to the entire local government rather than leaving it to one department. The UMP also seeks to promote participatory processes in local government decision-making; to promote strategic thinking in planning; and to tie local government plans to implementation through action plans and budgets.

SOLUTION 2: SECTOR PROGRAMMES

The last two decades also witnessed attempts by international development agencies to promote particular sectoral or issue-specific concerns in urban plans. Some of the most important of these are:

- **Localizing Agenda 21 programme (LA21):** UN-HABITAT developed this programme in 1992, following the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It offers a multi-year support system for selected secondary cities as the means to introduce or strengthen environmental concerns in their plans and operations.

- **Sustainable Cities Programme:** this UN-HABITAT and UNEP joint initiative was established during the early 1990s as a facility to package urban environmental planning and management approaches, technologies and knowhow through urban local authorities. The programme is founded on broad-based stakeholder participatory or city consultation approaches. Currently, the programme operates in over 30 countries worldwide. The approach adopted by the programme entails: strengthening local capacities to address urban environmental priority issues; enabling replication and scaling-up of environmental planning management; and mobilizing anchoring institutions for environmental planning management.

- **Safer Cities Programme:** this UN-HABITAT initiated programme in 1996 tackles crime and violence as issues of good urban governance. The programme focuses on developing the crime prevention capacities of local authorities. So far, Safer Cities initiatives are under way in several African cities and have been extended to Latin America, Asia and the Papua New Guinean capital, Port Moresby), to cater for an increasing need for exchange of information, knowledge and good practice.

- **The Disaster Management Programme:** UN-HABITAT established this programme to assist governments and local authorities to rebuild in countries recovering from war or natural disasters. It attempts to bridge the gap between relief and development by combining technical expertise, normative understanding and experience.

- **The Healthy Cities Programme:** the World Health Organization initiated this programme in 1986 improve, promote and maintain conducive urban environmental health conditions by involving all relevant actors and agencies within a city.

PLANNING SUSTAINABLE CITIES

- **Global Campaign on Urban Governance:** launched by UN-HABITAT in 1999, the campaign attempted to encourage urban planning to be more pro-poor and inclusive. Its vision was to realize the inclusive city - a place where everyone, regardless of wealth, status, gender, age, race or religion, is enabled to participate productively and positively in the opportunities that cities have to offer. Specifically, it promoted the involvement of women in decision-making.

- **Global Campaign for Secure Tenure:** UN-HABITAT launched this campaign in 2002. It aimed to improve the conditions of people living and working in slums and informal settlements by promoting security of tenure. It encouraged negotiation as an alternative to forced eviction, and the establishment of innovative systems of tenure that minimize bureaucratic lags and the displacement of the urban poor by market forces.

- **City Development Strategy:** City Alliance promoted this approach and encourages local governments to produce inter-sectoral and long-term visions and plans for cities in a participatory manner. This strategy can provide a framework for spatial urban plans. Among the essentials of a strategy are assessing the state of the city and its region; develop a long-term vision; focus on short-term results and accountability.

- **Gender responsiveness:** the UN-HABITAT Urban Management Programme considered various ways of mainstreaming gender issues in local government and planning. Gender-specific participatory governance tools such as gender budgeting, women's safety audits and women's hearings were developed.

SOLUTION 3: NEW URBAN FORMS: 'NEW URBANISM' AND THE 'COMPACT CITY'

Urban modernist forms and urban sprawl is highly car dependent, unfriendly for pedestrians and environmentally unsustainable. While low-density, sprawling cities are the norm in most parts of the world, there is a growing support for new urbanist and compact city forms.

- **The Compact City Approach** At the city-wide scale, the 'compact city' approach argues for medium- to high-built densities, enabling efficient public transport and thresholds to support concentrations of economic activity, services and facilities. Mixed-use environments and good public open spaces are important, especially as places for small and informal businesses. Urban containment policies are common, often implemented through the demarcation of a growth boundary or urban edge, which will protect natural resources beyond the urban area and will encourage densification within. Curitiba, in Brazil, has certain of these elements and is often cited as a good example of a planned, sustainable and public transport-based city.

- **New Urbanism** The new urbanism approach operates at the local neighbourhood level. This position promotes local areas with fine-grained, mixed-use, mixed housing types, compact form, an attractive public realm, pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, defined centres and edges, and varying transport options. Facilities such as health, libraries, retail and government services cluster around key public transport facilities and intersections to maximize convenience. These spatial forms have been strongly promoted in the United States and have been implemented in the form of neighbourhoods such as Celebration Town and Seaside.

Most of the new and innovative approaches to urban planning discussed above are moving in the direction of the normative principles for urban planning. Most are attempting to resolve what have been clear problems in traditional modernist planning approaches. There is some commonality across the various new approaches, with most attempting to: be strategic rather than comprehensive; be flexible rather than end-state oriented and fixed; be action and implementation oriented through links to budgets, projects and city-wide or regional infrastructure; be stakeholder or community driven rather than only expert driven; and be linked to political terms of office.