

Background paper
**Mainstreaming EPM Lessons of Experience at
National Level**

Introduction

Globally speaking, many good local government experiences never see the portals of national planning. They often sprout, bloom and wither at the local level without ever getting an opportunity to sharpen and enrich national policies, strategies, legislation and programme guidelines. This is because we seldom find effective and sustainable institutional mechanisms that regularly document and analyze such experience, codify and mainstream their lessons into national policy and legislation, that will in turn ensure their application by all local authorities.

Field lessons are results of socially-engineered, costly experimentations. Therefore, it is not only economically imprudent but also politically incorrect not to document, analyse and use the lessons learned for national-level intellectual discourse and national frameworks development.

This paper is an effort to get you to think on how proven local experiments and good practices in Environment Planning & Management (EPM) could be mainstreamed at the national level. These are proud products of more than a decade of experimentation and experience under the now well-known Sustainable Cities Programme/Localizing Agenda 21(SCP/LA21) that UN-Habitat and UNEP are jointly fostering. These lessons have been hand-crafted, course-corrected and field-proven. It explains the process and key elements of mainstreaming EPM at the national level as an effective tool of urban development, environmental management and poverty reduction.

Importance of mainstreaming EPM at national level

The EPM process is presently working in about 100 cities spread out in 32 countries. Encouraged by successful local experiments and demonstrations, most cities are now integrating the EPM process into their administrative thinking, behaviour, procedures, and routine practice. On an individual basis their impact has been fairly impressive at the local level. But in all fairness, these city-level impacts remain “a drop in the ocean” compared to overall the city and national needs. These good practices need to be properly and systematically documented, disseminated, financed citywide, and replicated to all cities nationally if they are to really reduce poverty and improve decentralised service delivery. All in all, EPM must get mainstreamed into national frameworks. It is then, and only then, that systemic environment planning and management could be elevated to the national agenda & debate and then be automated into national laws and support mechanisms.

Lessons to Mainstream

There are two distinct lessons to be mainstreamed: institutional mechanisms for City Profiling, City Consultations, Working Groups, Participatory Budgeting and EMIS systems which permit and promote intensive stakeholder participation and robust public private partnerships. In addition, there are numerous SCP/LA21 supported thematic field innovations (or demonstration projects) where improved local environmental governance

have greatly improved basic urban service delivery and improved the living conditions of the urban poor. Both types are of critical importance to refine and strengthen national policies, strategies, laws and guidelines.

Mainstream EPM at national level is not easy

Finding institutional mechanisms to use local lessons to influence and improve national frameworks and guidelines is neither simple nor easy. On the other hand, if the will is there, it is not too difficult either. However, the fact that nearly a half the SCP globally supported cities are in Sri Lanka (18), Tanzania (13), Senegal (7), Morocco (6) and China (3) tells its own story. A critical lesson learnt has been partnership building – a National partnership of sector Ministries (urban, environment and local government), local government associations, and capacity-development anchoring institutions. Such a partnership is common in all these countries, each performing their own roles: building the institutional space for pro-poor focused EPM, advocating political support at the city-level, and capacitating human resources. In each country the EPM approach has positively impacted on three main areas of local governance i.e. urban planning, environmental management and poverty reduction. Such partnerships ensure long term sustainability, each playing their role to fully incorporate the EPM approach and lessons learned into national frameworks, creating the necessary political will, commitment and support for universal application and rapid up-scaling

At the national level, EPM is being mainstreamed through a number of instruments and mechanisms.

Mainstreaming EPM in national policies and strategies

National policy frameworks are the watershed for national fiscal policies. Incorporating EPM approach into national policies and strategies invariably means directing vital financial resources to the provinces and local authorities to support and sustain environment planning and poverty reduction. For example, in many countries Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) is the main national instrument for implementing MDGs. Yet, the reduction strategies seldom include urban and environment dimensions. The symbiosis between them, and the importance of participatory urban planning and sound local-level environment management for poverty reduction must be adequately understood and addressed by these policies and strategies. Local authorities and civil society must be involved in the national debate to define and refine them. The need is to help EPM lessons of experience find their way into national policy frameworks. In Tanzania this happened some time ago, when the national urban development policy was revised using Sustainable Dar-es-Salaam experiences. Similar changes have begun to happen in Senegal, which will soon create a Local Authorities chapter in the committee set up to revise the national strategy on poverty reduction. The Local-EPM Project in the Philippines mainstreamed the EPM approach into implementation of the Local Government Code. Similarly, on another plain, the Air Quality Management effort initiated under the SCP in Colombo, Sri Lanka has now become a national level air quality-monitoring strategy. Also, in Sri Lanka, the initial SCP/LA21 experience in three cities has helped influence the National Urban Sector Policy Framework, whilst the Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government has prepared a White Paper to mainstream participatory environmental governance in upcoming legislative reform.

Mainstreaming EPM in national legislation

Policies and strategies are not enough. There is also a need for effective laws to transform policies into action. Laws provide the framework and anvil for their nation-wide application. Through legislative enactments, minute local experiences can be mainstreamed for universal application and for accelerated impact on the whole nation. There are examples. In Peru, the Arequipa City's experiment in pollution testing of automobiles is now endorsed as a national law. In Sri Lanka, the Supreme Court has enjoined 11 local authorities to submit comprehensive solid waste management plans for their cities, with similar judicial enforcement against Indian local governments. EPM-based policy changes in Tanzania lead to substantive modifications of the national Town Planning legislation to mainstream the City Consultation process and participatory urban governance

Mainstreaming EPM in national guidelines and tools

Strictly speaking, strategies and laws too are not enough. There is a need for guidelines and tools to help local authorities implement them. The State must revise the existing development guidelines to include EPM approach and lessons. That will help maintain the participatory character of local level urban planning and environment management. National guidelines must stress the need to customize and use the EPM toolkits that are now available in most countries in reader-friendly formats. They must also insist on early institutionalisation of EPM mechanisms for stakeholder participation and public-private partnerships. Moreover, in formulating the guidelines, the participation of the EPM practitioners in local authorities and other stakeholders must be ensured. Cuba provides an example. EPM is the main theme of its Good Governance campaign through which the Institute of Physical Planning is using the LA21 lessons to improve the nation's urban planning practices. Integrating EPM into the Comprehensive Land Use Plan preparations in the Philippines was a similar success, which not only institutionalised EPM functions through City Environment and Natural Resource Offices but localised this at the Barangay-level. Similarly, the Administrative Centre for China's Agenda21 has mainstreamed EPM at the District-level through its Sustainable Communities Programme.

Mainstreaming EPM in national capacity building mechanisms

Having the necessary guidelines and tools is important but not sufficient. To mainstream the EPM approach for nation-wide application, human resource capacity building must receive adequate attention. Training is required for local government practitioners, elected officials and the civil society organizations. The experience shows the importance of having national level EPM anchor institutions to steer this training and capacity building. INAU in Morocco, IAGU in Senegal, AILSG in India, UCLAS in Tanzania, The Copper Belt University in Zambia, ACCA21 and Beijing University in China, SLILG and CURP in Sri Lanka, Asia Institute of Management and the University of the Philippines (School of Urban and Regional Planning) in the Philippines are all good examples of such anchorage. Going further, Sri Lanka has formulated a National Strategy on Local Government Capacity Development that will help institutionalize the training responsibility.

Mainstreaming EPM in academic curricula

National mainstreaming also means effectively navigating the documented local experiences and national EPM policy into academic curricula. The new millennium and its

challenges call for a new breed of professionals, urban planners and managers, not archaic administrators and technocrats. They are no more the providers but facilitators and, therefore, managers. Their education must be people-friendly and field-oriented. It should equip them with knowledge and skills to apply systems, methods and models that are convincingly pro-poor and provenly pro-environment and sustainable. Academic education and training must make them committed proponents and practitioners of EPM.

Yet, in most countries, academic education at the tertiary level is too conventional and is still encumbered by outdated master planning approaches and models. This is a formidable obstacle to produce the new breed of urban management experts. All too often in the past SCP/LA21 had to “de-school” their partners, but now they are currently working with the academics in universities and research institutions to introduce sound academic principles and practical training methods to inculcate an early interest in EPM. For this, university professors and other academics are encouraged to study the EPM approach and local lessons and provide technical support to local authorities and training institutions, whilst a partnership with the Sri Lankan Centre for Urban and Regional Planning is mainstreaming EPM lessons into the their Town Planning Institute professional examinations.

Mainstreaming EPM in national technical support mechanisms

Training is only one aspect of institutional capacity building. Equally important is appropriate and adequate mechanisms to provide technical support to local authorities and training institutions to implement the EPM process at every stage. In most cases, this is provided by project-financed national technical support teams. However, for sustainability and accelerated up-scaling, it is crucial that the countries own up these support mechanisms as a vital and permanent integral part of their own national institutions. Early institutionalization is critical for sustainability and for preparing such teams to be proactively responsive to local needs. Here too, there are several good examples including the UASU National Support Team in Tanzania, the Local Authorities Support Unit at the Directorate of Physical Planning in Morocco, the Project Support Team anchored in the Sri Lankan Ministry of Urban Development and Water Supply.

National financial support mechanisms

Policies, laws, training and technical support are vital and necessary ingredients for national level mainstreaming. Yet, they are sterile without the guarantee of financial and other resources required for launching, conducting and sustaining local EPM processes. Some governments are already providing counterpart funding, though insufficiently small, to the ministries that implement SCP/LA21 programmes. It is, therefore, bounden on national leaders present here today to make sure upon their return to the respective countries, that their national budget provides sufficient financial allocations to activate and support local authorities to effectively implement the EPM approach. For this purpose, lobbying by EPM stakeholders such as the local authorities and civil society activists is useful. But, enlightened leaders do not require reminders or political pressure to do right things.

Conclusion

Obviously, the responsibility of EPM mainstreaming lies mainly with the related ministries, particularly the ones dealing with Environment, Local Government and Urban Development. Obviously, sustainable national legislations are those that derive strength from local success. But, the question is how many of our national leaders and administrative decision makers including some of you who are gathered here have given time to study, promote and mainstream those splendid local lessons into national laws.

Therefore, having experimented with EPM for over ten long years globally, it is time to ask from ourselves a few pertinent questions and seek honest answers.

- As a national leader, to what extent have you known what EPM has been doing in your country to improve urban environment planning and management? If not, what corrective action would you take upon your return to improve your involvement and knowledge?
- If you are adequately aware of what is happening, are you convinced that EPM can contribute to improve national policy and legal framework in your country?
- If convinced, what will you do upon your return, to mainstream the EPM approach into your national policies, legislations and capacity building agenda?
- How much time and effort would you personally commit to make it happen?
- Will you convert this commitment into a strategic Plan to mainstream EPM nationally?

Mainstreaming EPM at national level			
Mainstreaming EPM where?	Mainstreaming EPM in which areas of concern?	Who can contribute to mainstreaming EPM?	How can EPM mainstreaming can be enhanced?
	Urban development, Environment management, Poverty Reduction		
National Legislation	<input type="checkbox"/> Planning act <input type="checkbox"/> Decentralisation law <input type="checkbox"/> National environmental legislation	<input type="checkbox"/> Habitat committee <input type="checkbox"/> Ministries <input type="checkbox"/> Ass. of Local Authorities <input type="checkbox"/> Parliamentarians	<input type="checkbox"/> Revising and amending national legislation
National Strategies	<input type="checkbox"/> UNDAF <input type="checkbox"/> National physical plan <input type="checkbox"/> National Environment Action Plan	<input type="checkbox"/> HPM/UNDP <input type="checkbox"/> Habitat Committee <input type="checkbox"/> National Committee 21 <input type="checkbox"/> Ass. of Local Authorities	<input type="checkbox"/> Participating in strategy formulation, revision and implementation monitoring
National Guidelines and tools	<input type="checkbox"/> Planning guidelines <input type="checkbox"/> Guidelines for natural resources and environmental risks management <input type="checkbox"/> Pro poor guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/> Ministries <input type="checkbox"/> National support team <input type="checkbox"/> EPM experts	<input type="checkbox"/> Revising guidelines and tools incorporating EPM lessons of experience
National Capacity building mechanisms	<input type="checkbox"/> Training of urban practitioners <input type="checkbox"/> Training of elected official <input type="checkbox"/> Training of NGOs and CBOs	<input type="checkbox"/> EPM anchoring institution <input type="checkbox"/> Specialised training institution <input type="checkbox"/> Ministries	<input type="checkbox"/> Establishing EPM anchoring institution <input type="checkbox"/> Developing national CB agenda
National Technical support mechanisms	<input type="checkbox"/> EPM technical backstopping <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental management technical support <input type="checkbox"/> Pro poor technical support	<input type="checkbox"/> National Technical support team <input type="checkbox"/> Ministries	<input type="checkbox"/> Establishing technical support team and mechanisms
National Financial support mechanisms	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban development processes and studies <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental management processes and studies <input type="checkbox"/> Poverty alleviation processes and studies <input type="checkbox"/> Capital investments	<input type="checkbox"/> Ministries <input type="checkbox"/> National funds	<input type="checkbox"/> Budgetary allocation for national support programmes <input type="checkbox"/> Influencing distribution and repartition of funds
Academic curricula	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban planning curricula <input type="checkbox"/> Local development curricula <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental curricula <input type="checkbox"/> Social curricula	<input type="checkbox"/> Universities <input type="checkbox"/> Ministry of education <input type="checkbox"/> EPM consultants from the academic sector	<input type="checkbox"/> Assess existing curricula <input type="checkbox"/> Define required improvements of curricula