Urban Dimension of the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific

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Presentation Outline

- Introduction: Urbanizing World and Urbanizing Asia-Pacific
- Sustainable Development Goals
- Urban Dimension of the SDGs
- Implications for the Asia-Pacific cities, countries and region
- Closing Remarks

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Introduction: Urbanizing Asia/Pacific

- **Urbanization is inevitable** – The world is urbanizing, the developing world is urbanizing rapidly.

- The A/P experiences **second-most rapid urbanization** among the world’s regions. By 2018 the A/P will have **more people living in urban areas** than those living in rural ones.

- There are 17 **megacities** in the A/P now, will be 22 megacities by 2030 – they play dominant economic roles.

- But 90% of the urban population is actually in **secondary and smaller cities** – which often are outside of the growing global/international trades and lacking financial, institutional and technical capacities.

Source: The State of Asian and Pacific Cities 2015: Urban transformations – shifting from quantity to quality
Introduction: Urbanizing Asia/Pacific

- Asia-Pacific is a very diverse region – always difficult (and risky) to make generalization. The levels of urbanization, urban development and rapidity of the urban growth among the A/P’s sub-regions and among countries can be very different:
  - High and low levels of urbanization
  - Advanced, developing and less developed cities
  - Rapid and slow growth of urban population

- Inequality: Even within any one city in the A/P, one can easily find advanced parts of the city located nearby squatter settlements with no urban facility, infrastructure and services.

Source: Urbanization trends in Asia and the Pacific, UNESCAP’s SPPS Fact Sheet, November 2013
In September 2015, the world has agreed on **17 goals (and 169 targets)** to make the world more sustainable by 2030.

- A life with **dignity for all**: A spirit that no one should be “left behind”.
- Noble goals indeed – but **are they really achievable**?
- How are these goals going to be achieved in the A/P, which has countries that are among the **richest** and most advanced while at the same time has also countries among the **poorest** and in the least developed?
### Urban Dimension of the SDGs

All 17 goals – not only Goal 11 – are related to urban development, strongly or less so.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</strong></td>
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- **“Quality urbanization”** has the potential to help eradicate poverty – in urban as well as in rural areas.

- Urban expansion threatens some fertile lands in the surrounding agriculture areas → “land-efficient” urban development ("compact cities"); the idea of “urban agriculture”/”urban permaculture”

- The concept of "healthy cities"

- The concept of "inclusive cities" which accommodate the needs of women, youth, elderly, disabled, minorities and migrants

- **Gender sensitive** urban development
## Urban Dimension of the SDGs

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<tr>
<th>Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</th>
<th>While cities need to ensure universal access to clean water and proper sanitation (exp. Indonesia’s “100-0-100” program), cities also need to conserve and protect water resources.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all</td>
<td>The concept of “energy-efficient city”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</td>
<td>Cities should not only be attractive and conducive for big economic investment but also for small-scale and informal economies as well. Low-income employees should be facilitated to live nearby their work places (exp. Low-cost housing near the CBD/strategic urban areas)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</td>
<td>Cities need to promote smart/green infrastructure and buildings</td>
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Urban Dimension of the SDGs

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<th>Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries</th>
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<td>Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</td>
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<td>Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</td>
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<td>Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development</td>
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We also need to reduce inequality within cities (where inequality is usually greater) by, among others, some “affirmative approach” to spatial planning and housing. Urban informal sector need to be accommodated and supported (when possible become formal).

The concept of “safer cities”, “inclusive cities”, “resilient cities”, “sustainable cities”

Urban population generally consume disproportionately more (and therefore also produce more waste – much of which un-organic). Cities’ ecological footprints tend to be big. Need stronger campaigns for sustainable consumption and better control of urban sprawl. TOD, “pedestrian-friendly, 3R etc.

The concept of “low-carbon cities”

Urban water-fronts need to be revitalized, made attractive and open to public so that people will have better “emotional attachment” to the marine environment.
Urban Dimension of the SDGs

Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Promote “compact cities”, control “urban sprawl”, introduce/reintroduce the concept of greenbelts and green open spaces (exp. Indonesia’s spatial planning law requires 30% of urban land to be allocated for green open space – although implementation is still a challenge).

“Urban agriculture” and “urban forestry” will maintain or add the biological diversity of an urban environment.

Promote and improve urban governance that is transparent, accountable, participatory, inclusive with equal access to public services for all citizens.

Promote and support cooperation between/among cities, not only within the country but also cross-countries, not only city-government to city government but also people to people (and, of course, business to business).
In this “urban era”, where more people living in cities – with its positive as well as negative implications – the achievement of the SDGs (incl. in dealing with the climate change) will be very much dependent on whether we can create **sustainable cities**

If we fail to create more sustainable cities, urbanization and urban development, chances are the SDGs will not be achieved

This is true for the world in general, but also true for the Asia-Pacific region
### Implications for Cities in the A/P

- Quality urbanization
- Compact city – control of urban sprawl
- Healthy city
- Universal access to clean water and proper sanitation
- Inclusive and resilient cities
- Safer cities
- Eco-city, low-carbon city, sustainable city
- Urban agriculture/forestry
- Green open spaces/urban greenbelts
- Green urban infrastructure and buildings

While in some cases – more vividly in the case of China – urbanization has significantly help alleviate poverty, in many other Asian cities, urbanization is more characterized by **people trying to escape from rural poverty only to end up with urban poverty** (although may not be as obvious as the phenomenon in Africa) → need to improve the “quality of urbanization”

In most other aspects, the A/P cities have **big “gaps”** (between how they should be and how they are now), but the region also provides **best practice examples**
Closing Remarks

The A/P poses both big problems and great potentials to solve those problems:

- **Strengthen partnerships**: Those cities that have advanced financial, managerial and technical capacities should be encouraged to support the less advanced cities.

- **Build local capacity** to manage cities more sustainably to improve services, facilities and infrastructure. National government should support in areas where LG’s capacity is limited.

- **Replicate and scale-up** more vigorously some of the region’s best practices.

Giving more serious attention to **urban issues** should not mean lesser attention to **rural problems**. They are interlinked.