

Third National Dialogue on the Urban Nexus in Thailand “Strengthening Collaboration and Access to Financing to Support Integrated Resource Management in Thai Cities”

Meeting Room A, UNCC Bangkok, 3 May 2018

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

Managing rapidly growing cities and urban regions is one of our most critical global challenges, particularly with regards to natural resource management. Of all natural resources, energy, water and food are the most essential to sustain development efforts – but they are also the most vulnerable to future demands. At the 2014 General Assembly thematic debate on Water, Sanitation and Sustainable Energy in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the Secretary General forewarned that by 2030 the world will need at least 50 per cent more food, 45 per cent more energy and 30 per cent more water. Much of these demands are being driven by cities and their urbanizing regions.

Globally, the Asia and the Pacific region has the highest urban growth rates. More than 60 per cent of the worldwide urban population is living in this region, and approximately 120,000 people are added to its urban centers each day (World Migration Report 2015). According to the United Nations Environment Programme, material use in this region increased from 5.7 to 37 billion tonnes per year between 1970 and 2010, which is over 50 per cent of global material consumption. The region utilizes 3 kilograms of materials to produce one dollar of GDP, whereas the rest of the world uses only 1 kilogram per dollar of GDP. What is more, the World Bank estimates that daily waste generation in the region will increase from 1 million tonnes in 2012 to about 2.5 million tonnes by 2025.

In Asia-Pacific, managing the resource footprint of cities calls for institutional coordination and other forms of collaboration, which meet requirements for modern day policymaking or practice. The majority of cities/municipal administrations in Asia-Pacific continue to plan and manage along sectorial lines and within municipal boundaries. Consequently, they are unable to harness the synergies among water, energy and food security and the potential co-benefits arising from integrated resource management.

The “nexus” approach aims to integrate planning and management processes of the key sectors of energy, water and food, contributing to the long-term sustainable development of rapidly growing cities and their regions. Since 2013, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH has been implementing the project “Integrated resource management in Asian Cities: the Urban Nexus”, in partnership with ESCAP and Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), and with funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The project supports 12 cities in seven countries in Asia with developing cross-sectoral infrastructure projects and integrating the nexus approach into urban planning. Horizontal and vertical integration, which refers to governance that involves coordinating and collaborating between different sectors at the same, as well as different, levels is a key component of the project.

In Thailand, ESCAP has organized two national dialogues to date: March 2015 and March 2017.¹ These dialogues highlighted the relevance of integrated resource management, especially in the critical areas of energy, water and food security, and facilitated discussion about challenges and opportunities related to mainstreaming the nexus approach. Participants discussed financial mechanisms to support municipal resource efficient infrastructure projects as well as national policies and strategies to strengthen integrated resource management in cities. Considering recommendations from these previous dialogues and recent feedback gathered from Thai cities, this third national dialogue will explore ways to strengthen horizontal and vertical integration, improve access to financing, and understand how urban nexus initiatives in Thailand contribute to national and global agendas by engaging presenters, panelists and the audience in a series of moderated, interactive discussions.

Objectives

The third national dialogue on the Urban Nexus in Thailand aims to achieve the following:

1. Strengthen the platform for dialogue between various levels of government and utilities and among various relevant line ministries on issues concerning water, wastewater, solid waste, food, land use planning and energy sectors.
2. Inform the provincial and national level of the challenges cities face regarding access to financing mechanisms for innovative infrastructure projects available to local governments and find solutions to these barriers.
3. Learn how the urban nexus approach can contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related global efforts.

Audience and Participants

The target audience comprises:

1. National government officials from the various departments relevant to the nexus sectors, particularly on issues of public works and urban planning, energy, water, wastewater, solid waste and finance.
2. Provincial and Local government officials from the partner cities in Thailand
3. Representatives of international organisations, the private sector, financing institutions and other relevant stakeholders with an interest in integrated resource management.

¹ Information about the national dialogues can be accessed here: www.unescap.org/urban-nexus/national-dialogues