

United Nations ESCAP Pacific Urban Agenda

Approximately 2.3 million people live in Pacific cities and towns. Annual urban population growth rates of over 3-4% in some Micronesian and Melanesian countries means populations double in 15-25 years. Many urban populations are growing at twice the rate of national populations. Urban growth is expected to persist because of high rural-to-urban migration and high levels of fertility. As urban populations grow and rural-urban migration continues poverty continues to urbanize.



Maravu settlement, Suva, Fiji

Millennium Development Goal 7, target 11 requires by 2020 to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers. The Pacific Urban Agenda (PUA) addresses this global concern within the Pacific context.

Regional Response

The PUA was first developed at an ESCAP sub-regional workshop in 2003, and adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its sixtieth session held in 2004. Pacific Islands Forum Leaders subsequently endorsed the PUA in 2005 and

it was included in the Pacific Plan.¹ In April 2007 the second sub-regional PUA workshop was convened by the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre in collaboration with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum Pacific Office and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

PUA 2007:

1. Institutional framework.

- a. Review institutional and legal frameworks;
- b. develop an integrated and participatory approach to urban planning;
- c. strengthen local government capacity;
- d. improve data on urban settlements.

2. Urban environment.

- a. Develop strategies to address gaps in the provision of basic services;
- b. Monitor impact of urban development on the provision of services;
- c. Monitor and evaluate environmental and disaster hazards.

3. Access to serviced shelter.

- a. Develop or improve housing for the urban poor;
- b. Develop savings and loans schemes for housing;
- c. Involve customary land owners in urban planning;
- d. Develop national action plans for informal settlements;
- e. Develop strategies to improve supply of affordable rental housing;
- f. Investigate building codes.

4. Urban quality of life.

- a. Strengthen traditional authorities to address conflict and security concerns;
- b. Recognise the informal sector and participation of vulnerable groups in economic activities;
- c. Develop and strengthen community based safety nets;
- d. Empower vulnerable groups through recognising rights and opportunities.

The 2007 workshop noted that urban and rural development issues need to be addressed in tandem since migration from rural areas, especially by youths in search of

¹ Initiative 13.5

employment, is driving urbanization within many countries of the Pacific. In recognition of this phenomenon, urban development has been integrated in national sustainable development strategies in some countries. It is important that urban planning and management policies focus on the benefits of urban development on local people and carefully consider the advantages and disadvantages of the perceived solutions to urbanization. The 2007 workshop made a wide range of recommendations to address pressing urban management, planning and development concerns.

At a further regional workshop of Pacific planners convened by the Planning Institute of Australia, AusAID and UN-Habitat in October 2007, the PUA was refined to a *Regional Action Framework* which identified ten areas to implement the PUA and three high priority areas for implementation within five years.



Informal settlement, Funafuti, Tuvalu

Regional Support

ESCAP together with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Commonwealth Local Government Forum Pacific Office and the United Nations' Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) have agreed to work together to implement the *Regional Action Framework* over the next five years in support of national initiatives. The support of other development partners will also be crucial. The *Regional Action Framework* also calls for the establishment of a *Pacific Urban Management Support Facility* which

would organise and convene regional forums to share information, develop capacity, collect data, develop awareness and provide technical support as required.

Regional Action Framework Priorities

Institutional Framework/Urban Policy Development

- * Develop national urbanisation strategy based on national plan, with budgetary framework and local urban management plans for urban centres;
- * Review legislation, policy and regulatory framework for managing urbanisation;
- * Strengthen participatory urban planning and management at all levels of government;
- * Establish inter-agency co-ordination mechanisms.

Building Capacity

- * Review information on urbanisation in each country and develop tools for improving information collection, analysis & dissemination;
- * Build technical capacity of planners and people involved in the planning and policy process;
- * Document best practices and lessons learnt;
- * Provide transnational professional support, including inter-country secondments, exchanges and volunteer programs.

Advocacy And Political Commitment

- * Build political awareness of urbanisation issues and a political will to prioritise resources;
- * Communicate rationale for the importance of urban issues to governments and communities
- * Ensure awareness of development partners about where they should (and should not) put their money.

The 2007 PUA Workshop identified the potential value of an urban management programme which would support countries to analyse and address management and development issues, so urbanisation could positively contribute to national socio-economic development – as it has done elsewhere in the world. Much of this work is based on the assumption that there can be no sustainable development without sustainable urbanization. This will require an effective urban planning and management support programme.

For more information see:

www.unescap.org/epoc